

# Young, Fast & Dead:

## A pilot collaborative study exploring communication strategies with “P” Plate drivers



Getting MAD: winning filmmakers Luke Vandenberg (left), Luke Colella, Blair Cameron, Tahnee Ling, Lindsey Perry and Jessica Carter.

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# **Young, Fast and Dead: A pilot collaborative study exploring communication strategies with “P” Plate drivers**

## **Research Team**

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## **Acknowledgements**

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## **Background:**

Epidemiological data show “P” Platers are alarmingly over-represented in road deaths (based on the number of licences they hold). We asked, why *“have health promotion and advertising campaigns failed novice drivers?”* Our project sought to record and analyse University students’ road safety campaign solutions. This research highlighted that key stakeholders viz: young drivers, offer a unique, relevant perspective on this issue.

Some 600 university students from The University of Canberra, the University of Wollongong and Otago University (NZ) were involved in a multi-faceted research study involving the collection of pre-test data on attitudinal and behavioural data encompassing; thinking and behavioural styles, risk-taking and sensation-seeking behaviours and driving history. Electronic surveys were administered via learning management systems.

Students worked in small groups under guidance to complete a road safety assignment. They were required to (1) submit reflective journal comments aimed at focussing students’ awareness of road safety campaigns and changes they might notice in their or others’ driving behaviours and/or attitudes (2) present their campaign solutions to an audience of their peers and research team. The presentations were digitised and stored for easy access and sharing. A strategy was developed to test the ads on a high school/college student audience. There was a post project evaluation.

## **The Process:**

In order to ascertain if any behavioural or attitudinal change occurred, pre-test data will be gathered in the first week of Semester Two 2007. This included, attitudinal and behavioural data encompassing; thinking and behavioural styles, risk-taking and sensation-seeking behaviours and driving history. Electronic surveys were administered via learning management systems available to students across all campuses involved.



Students worked in small groups with guidance from the research-teaching team to complete a road safety assignment, this occurred concurrently, across two cohorts. Each week students were required to make and submit reflective comments in a journal. The reflective journal contents were “scaffolded”. Scaffolding was key as students were asked to reflect on specific items, and answer specific questions to focus students’ on their awareness of road safety campaigns, and changes they might notice in their (or others) driving behaviours and/or attitudes. For example has your reaction to road safety communication changed? Do you feel any different when driving? Have you noticed any changes in your driving behaviour? This scaffolding reduced random, unrelated reflections on the group process or general feelings about life, which although interesting, were not sought for the research project.

Students presented their campaign solutions to an audience of their peers and members of the research-teaching team. The presentations were digitised and this facilitated cost efficient, timely sharing of results, moderation and began a cache of assignments to be used to inform further studies.

Post evaluation took the form of analysis of reflective journals seeking evidence of reported behavioural change. The research team compared and analysed student campaign outputs, reflective journal themes, and survey data for commonality and difference between cohorts.

In particular we sought evidence of extraordinary campaign solutions that may affect behavioural change. As determined against:

- the marking criteria
- by class reaction
- reported attitudinal and /or behavioural change in journals
- links to any specific aspect of the action learning project.

## **Objectives:**

The major objective of this research was to encourage safer driving practices by novice drivers at the three universities, through encouraging them to participate in action learning programmes.

This was achieved by:

- 1) Trialling group-based deep learning assignments as a tool to affect change in driving behaviour;
- 2) Key stakeholders (novice drivers who are university students) producing effective well targeted communication campaigns that are relevant to the target audience;
- 3) Ascertaining if this action learning study on road safety was effective with various student cohorts;
- 4) Developing a plan to test ads created by university students on a high school / college student audience, and
- 5) Using a questionnaire and focus groups, establish a baseline of attitudes and behaviours in the target audience.

## Results

### **1) Trialling group-based deep learning assignments as a tool to affect change in driving behaviour**

The original vision when seeking to affect students' driving behaviour, was to task students to produce campaigns, to ascertain if their campaigns mirrored current industry trends in road safety oriented communication campaigns. This mirroring of trends might have taken many forms; tone - for example, fear; media vehicle choices - for example television advertisements; target market - for example young males; strategy - for example negative reinforcement or compliance messages.

The researchers envisaged the resultant campaigns, produced by the novice driving target market, designed for the novice driving target audience, would provide insights for policy makers, to facilitate more effective communication with this seemingly media resistant group. We envisaged the so-called 'production' outcomes, ie. the campaigns, would provide insights.

Surprisingly, most students' comments revealed they were not familiar with the horrific statistics which surround novice drivers and road safety, despite extensive, one might say *blanket* media coverage of the issues. Almost daily, it seems, the media reveal another road safety related tragedy involving P-plate drivers. The assignment gave the opportunity for this information to become 'top of mind' for students, particularly in the act of driving.

The researchers note this raises the important issue of choosing appropriate media vehicle use, for targeted audience message reception. It is crucial that the message be conveyed during, or in close proximity, to the driving experience. For example: radio advertisements, played while driving; bumper stickers observed on other vehicles while driving; roadside billboards, viewed while driving, where permissible by law.

Through close working with, class discussions and observation of the students, reinforced by their reflective journals, the act of deeply immersing themselves in the production of road safety oriented campaigns positively affected their driving behaviors. The researchers did not anticipate that the *process* of making campaigns would also reap insights.

In 62 percent of cases (95 cases, of 1@ 76 and 1@ 80 ACT student cohorts) students reported that they still exceeded the speed limit, occasionally, while driving, but did so consciously, and intended to "do better next time", this was the case in 57 percent of cases (85 cases of 1@ 72 and 1@ 78 NSW student cohort, 150 total students).

30 percent (48 from the combined ACT cohort - 156 students) of female students reported that they were less likely to allow themselves to be driven by an alcohol affected driver, when 23 percent or 34 NSW young women reported the same.

Increased awareness of current road safety campaigns was reported by 67 percent of ACT student participants (105 of the combined ACT cohort of 156 students), with 118 students or 79 percent of NSW students also reporting increased awareness.

### **2) Key stakeholders (novice drivers who are university students) producing effective well targeted communication campaigns that are relevant to the target audience**

As a general note, the researchers observed that the standard of assessable work produced by students was markedly better than in previous (non road safety related) assignments. On asking the students why, students reported that the gravity and relevance of the subject matter, and the fact that this assignment might help save a young life, lead to their increased commitment, "better than peddling lollies to fat kids". By tapping into the students' value system, the task was given prominence in their hotly contested time management allocations.

Further, as all students were working in self-selected smaller groups of six, which completed the identical assignment concurrently, this became a de-facto competitive environment, in which to produce campaigns. In effect, all 'boats rose with the tide' of perceived greater import than previous set tasks.

Of special note is the University of Wollongong Health Behaviour (HE) students were first year, Bachelor of Physical & Health Education students, the University of Canberra Integrated Communication Campaigns (ICC) students were final semester, third year Bachelor of Communication Advertising and Marketing Communication students. That first years were able to rise to the task so well is testament to well-designed curricula and a well-briefed assignment, careful guidance by the research team and youthful exuberance.

In part this also explains their leaning to television as the dominant media vehicle of choice. They were tasked to produce a visual campaign, but had not been schooled in the intricacies of marketing communication strategy, in which the UC cohort were well versed, which lead to lots of viral and non conventional media choices by ICC students. The underpinning theory behind marketing communication, is to communicate in a dialogical fashion, with the target audience in the way they prefer, at the time of their choice, through their preferred medium, or way of gathering information.

Against the marking criteria not one (nil) student assignment failed. The lowest grade awarded for the ACT cohorts was a credit minus or 64.5 percent for the UOW cohort: 67 percent.

Half the assignments scored the highest possible grade, high distinction 85 percent - 100 percent in both universities. This is an outstanding result, in terms of excellent work, against the marking criteria, across entire cohorts.

It was fascinating to observe the wealth of positive student feedback, publicly offered, about their peers' assignments, even given the 'competition' between groups. Students were very forthcoming with praise for innovative media vehicle choices, a well-niched target market strategy, or a great tag line. The students had absolutely nothing to gain from this flow of positivity, which made it all the more delightful to observe. Each tutorial (small class of up to 18 students) was unanimous in their opinions of which campaigns were the best, against the criteria, which refreshingly matched the moderated, graded result.

In each tutorial, students were deeply immersed the production of one campaign, extensively observed and critiqued another two campaigns, and shared the development and results with the other 6 - 7 campaigns produced across the year's cohort. Next, they were shown excerpts from other university's campaigns. This meant each student was exposed to up to 12 campaigns each semester. In effect, a multiple hit strategy of exposure to road safety messages was enacted.

### **3) Ascertaining if this action learning study on road safety was effective with various student cohorts**

The research design planned to incorporate a cohort of tourism students. Unfortunately there was insufficient 'buy in' from staff in that area to enact an effective inclusion of that cohort. Future researchers should be mindful of indentifying the benefits to stimulate other staff to become involved. It became very clear everyone does not share a passion for road safety and an urgency to affect change.

The cohort of University of Otago (Otago) students also proved somewhat mercurial, with staff role and responsibility changes rendering an intensive time investment in an assignment unworkable. The research team devised then, to use this cohort in a consultancy role to test and bounce concepts with.

Interestingly the summation of data from Otago, showed that if the novice drivers had been involved in a motor vehicle accident, they were particularly resistant to any road safety related message, as in their eyes, they had actual proof of having brushed with death and survived.

Reflective journal comments recorded nine weeks after the end of the assignment revealed that in 45 percent of cases (70 of the 156 ACT students) awareness of, and attention to safe behaviour, while driving, had endured. Recall of student produced campaign tag lines, which admittedly is a blunt, although industry standard measure, was reported by 118 students of the ACT cohorts or 79 percent.

Recall is a blunt measure due to the non-linear relationship between awareness, or message recall, and actual behaviour. For example, a person intends to not eat chocolate, however their actual behaviour often falls short of the mark. This can be paralleled with the students' earlier comments about their intention to drive within the speed limit, and their commitment to do better, after they sped while driving. Cognisance of behaviour is a positive step *on the way* to changed actions.

NSW journal entries were taken at 4 weeks into the process, not the nine week later lag. The data from the NSW cohorts mirrored the ACT figures except in recall of student tag lines which was reported at 93 percent or 139 students of the 150 strong cohorts.

Please note: this recall of others' taglines, as they were guarded jealously during the production phase, occurred after **a single session**, of multiple exposures, so it is more akin to a trip to the movies, than ongoing exposure to television or radio commercials. This is vital information for policy makers and strategists as cinema advertising, is extremely cost effective compared to television advertising, in terms of a targeted, captive audience, not perhaps a passive wash into an empty room, while folks make coffee or have a convenience break.

#### **4) Developing a plan to test ads created by university students on a high school / college student audience**

A plan was drafted, ad hoc testing was performed at high schools, which aligned with university student preferences and grade results. However despite our best attempts, it proved beyond the research team's persuasive and management powers to enact a full scale secondary school testing program in the ACT and NSW.

Many student groups performed spontaneous testing, within their networks, of concepts prior to production, and the University of Canberra had 15 students visitors from local high schools, University of Wollongong had eight students from local schools, who provided positive feedback and responded well to the campaigns they saw, which again, aligned with university student preferences and grade results

#### **5) Using a questionnaire and focus groups, establish a baseline of attitudes and behaviours in the target audience**

The survey administered through the learning management system proved to be problematic. As the distribution device is not something the researchers had the power to *compel* students to use, they did so on a sporadic basic. This rendered information non representative and unhelpful for statistical purposes. However in summary what was reported showed; data obtained from the Self Reported Driving Behaviour Questionnaire highlighted associations with facets of young and novice self reported risk taking behaviours and Sensation Seeking Scores. Although there was no significant correlation with speeding and mobile phone use, noteworthy correlations were noted, with the given limitations, with males' higher TAS and total scores and their higher self reports of driving under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs, driving over the legal (blood alcohol concentration) BAC limit and illegal drag or street racing.

## **Focus groups**

One focus group of eight participants was run in NSW, seven focus groups were run, although this was not compulsory, by students in the ACT cohort to test and compare results gleaned from campaign work, to inform campaign strategy and compare across the cohorts. As the research focus was on the qualitative output, we have aggregated the results from the focus groups to report only general trends. Those reported here from 2008, are consistent with those reported in 2007.

Focus groups formed the basis for in-depth discussion on young and novice driver road safety. Participants were encouraged to discuss their philosophies, values and attitudes on young and novice driver risk taking and their over representation in crash statistics. Focus group discussions were observed and transcribed to analyse key themes related to young drivers' risk taking behaviour and attitudes.

The focus groups were unanimous in their belief and attitude that young males 16-25 years were the greatest risk takers. They identified speeding, drink driving and dangerous/reckless driving as the major areas of concern. Focus groups also recognised participation in risky driving behaviours as unacceptable however admitted to participating in at least risky driving behaviour.

The focus groups were undisputed that young and novice driver involvement in risky driving behaviours is multidimensional. The focus groups identified the following as potential reasons for this behaviour:

- 'Overconfidence in driving skills, particularly males' "Focus group Participant, 2008".
- Young and novice drivers 'do not take the road rules seriously' "Focus group Participant, 2008". This is often combined with attitudes of invincibility.
- 'Young and novice drivers do not recognise their behaviour as potentially risky' "Focus group Participant, 2008".
- A culture that associates 'drinking with good times' and a culture that associates 'speeding as a passage to manhood' "Focus group Participant, 2008".

## **Convenience.**

- A male participant "21-25 sub group" reflected on his experiences of big nights out 'I live just around the corner and would often consume a few drinks at the local pub then drive home "Focus group Participant, 2008".
  - His motives for this behaviour were:
    - Taxi fares are too expensive;
    - He viewed it as an inconvenience to wake up a family member or friends to pick him up; and
    - Poor time management.

## **Poor understanding of rules and regulations.**

- All participants in the focus groups admitted to speeding on at least one occasion. Their reasons were all associated with poor time management and running late.



- The focus groups believed the peer passenger restrictions are ‘unjustified and not effective at reducing young and novice drivers risk taking. In fact, it can have the reverse effect, promoting drink driving’ “Focus group Participant, 2008”. \*

\* ACT groups were given the option of including peer passenger limits and night driving curfews *in their campaigns*, although none currently exist in law, if their research indicated such inclusion would be beneficial for the target audience.

- Numerous members of the focus groups commented, that even with the peer passenger restrictions they would still offer their friends a lift if the situation called for it. They also commented they would ‘feel guilty’ if they rejected their friends request to take them home if they had more than one passenger.

Their attitude; ‘mateship is more important than listening to a rule that abandons a mate. They would probably end up worse for wear, if we left them there anyway’ “Focus group Participant, 2008”.

Focus groups recognised a range of deterrent of risky driving behaviours. These included:

*Physical/ Emotional consequences.*

- The focus groups identified the loss of a family member or friend as a major deterrent of risky driving behaviour.

*Physical consequence: penalty for actions.*

- This included a fine, the loss of a license and the loss of freedom. Freedom is seen as a major aspect of a young drivers life.

*Police presence.*

- Many focus group members commented on how their driving behaviours were affected after seeing a police officer. Many commented how they ‘slow down in fear of seeing another one around the corner’ “Focus group Participant, 2008”.
- However, all participant members commented how there is a lack of police enforcement. One participant commented ‘You hardly ever see them and when you do, you know where they hide’ “Focus group Participant, 2008”.
- The focus groups developed a number of recommendations they agreed may have some impact on young and novice driver risk taking habits behind the wheel.

These included:

- An increase of visible police presence
- Utilise advertising campaigns that create a negative social stigma attached to risky driving behaviour “seen as uncool”.

Focus groups suggested advertisements target passenger and peer responsibility ‘as often passengers are the ones who do not feel they can stand up to their peers, and if a peer tells their driver friend to stop, they are more likely to listen and respond’ “Focus group Participant, 2008”.

## **Discussion:**

In the Integrated Communication Campaigns "ICC" cohort, which is the cohort with a sophisticated understanding of: communication strategy and message reception. All campaigns produced avoided fear-based appeals. An overwhelming desire was for the campaigns to inform rather than preach, as the students observed if not a direct rejection of authority, certainly a questioning of its legitimacy.

The Health Promotion "HE" cohort, first year health behaviour students, new to campaign work, produced campaigns, which featured a broader range of appeals from humour to a single fear-based campaign including extremely graphic images of human decapitation.

In terms of style of delivery, and array of media channels adopted, a clear trend emerged in the ICC cohort. All campaigns heavily utilised viral components for the transmission of their message. This meant that message could infiltrate a population by being noteworthy enough or captivating enough for them to be shared peer to peer, like a virus. A less obtrusive "sell" of the message through the use of peers or target cohort members was seen as desirable, and more likely to affect positive behavioural change.

Some examples of these include: "blacklight" activated night club stamps; branded bar staff uniforms and "in club" competitions to win branded Tee-shirts; a viral army of high beam flashers and life-sized two dimensional cardboard police figures moved frequently to a variety of highly visible locations to affect a "police" presence like a freeway at night.

The HE cohort almost exclusively utilised the power and pervasiveness of television as the dominant media vehicle choice. This choice is not surprising, given their limited knowledge, as first years, of media channel choices, media strategy and the intricacies of marketing communication strategy and the need to understand in depth how this target audience interacts with various media vehicles.

## **Campaign theme tag lines**

Appendix One provides exemplars of nine of the best campaigns produced discussed in some detail. Below we will explore the breadth and universality of themes and provide a list of other campaign taglines to demonstrate clusters of interest.

### *P-Plate, number plate or SMS contractions*

TXting and Driving, will you ever get the mssg?  
Everyone's a P-Plater  
Real life, Real limits  
Time for a Change  
Know your code  
SAF : ET<sub>1</sub>  
FOCUS

### *Personal responsibility*

Do you want to Dig your own Grave?  
Get Focussed, Hang up the Habit  
Text and Drive, Will you Survive?  
Mirror there's a Killer in You  
What is your destination?  
Fatigue the silent killer  
Who's in Control?  
License or life?

*Gaming themes*

The Race to Save Young Lives – Boys vs Girls  
Life is not a game  
No restarts  
One life

*Positive reinforcement*

Life's a Bitch when you Drink and Drive  
Speeding won't get you aHead  
Take a Taxi – Bloody Legend  
The future of humps  
Life, priceless  
The lead foot

*Affect on others*

A Fate Worse than Death, A Lifetime of Guilt  
You may not die, but can you still live?  
Drink Driving, IS IT WORTH IT?  
Cutting out the Consequences  
SPEEDING, it's unforgivable  
Think \$mart, Drive \$afe  
It Affects Everyone  
Torty the Tortoise  
Life sentence

Students were able to choose the focus of their campaigns, these included topics as diverse as distraction both from the aspect of mobile phone use to cars overloaded with too many passengers. Using public transport was also addressed and the fact that a great night out is not complete until you'd had a fun ride home in a taxi. Suggestions were also made about the prohibitive cost of using taxis for transport, a call for reduced flag fall between midnight and 3am and the need to educate drivers to pick up, rather than avoid drunks.

Speeding proved to be a popular choice with strategies ranging from social ostracising of the speeder, reminders of yet fully developed decision making powers and driving skill, comparison between male and female brain development, to adoration and assumed or implied sexual prowess of those cool enough to drive safely.

Fatigue was addressed in only two campaigns. Drink driving was covered in many ways from exploring the impact of hurting others through poor behaviours, to finally being in the front of the nightclub queue due being 'legless' after a crash left them paraplegic and in a wheelchair, and shame at the consequence of killing people, and the lifetime of guilt to be endured, to not wasting the one life that you have and living while young.

Adoption of 'new' laws including night driving curfews and peer passenger limits was the feature of many campaigns, some ACT students also chose this option, even though we currently do not have such laws in place. The initial response by students choosing this option, was outrage that any kind of civil liberty could be 'attacked', and finally considering the research correlations to these two factors and weighing benefits.

Students also considered the fact that all Australian states and territories have different systems of gaining a motor vehicle driver's license ludicrous and more about turf wars than safety of young people or others on the road. This led to three campaigns lobbying the Government for uniform graduated licensing systems and better road conditions.

The development of a consistent national approach to licensing received overwhelming support through all forty-two campaign strategies produced by the ICC and HE cohorts.

Taking the helicopter view and considering the impact of your actions was addressed in many campaigns as students, as young drivers, feel young drivers care less about themselves than others, and that no campaign could *ever* convince a novice driver that they might die, but that to negatively impact others was reprehensible.

Roads are not places for games, was a theme explored numerous times through humour or more dark emotional tones. It was considered a strong possibility that an upbringing of gaming could result in this kind of thrill seeking gamesmanship be transferred to the road, one group chose an horrific level of graphic violence to address this.

The final two thematic clusters are that life is great when you drive safely explored the social and sexual benefits of compliant driving behaviours, and we that all have the potential to kill. Thus use of mirrors was a repeated choice, so we could be visually confronted by our own inner killer. The mirror was an interesting choice as it was chosen as often the last thing people will do before they go and get into a car, particularly when drunk, is go to the toilet. So mirrors in bars, or toilets of bars, was one easy way of getting the message as close as possible to the driving experience.

### **General trends**

Primary research conducted by the students to inform their campaigns - with sample sizes of 30 - 50 students revealed a number of interesting, alarming and hope-giving themes.

Please note: Detailed quantitative statistical analysis was not part of the research design, which was qualitative in nature, any statistics that follow are descriptive in nature, some data did not lend themselves to a descriptive statistic, with exact sample sizes estimated by students, or an incomplete set of reflective journals submitted.

- aberrant driving behaviours are mostly about getting attention
- 51 percent of those sampled stated they had driven unlicensed, drug-impaired, or alcohol impaired
- first year students felt shock tactics might change their behaviour
- third year students found fear doesn't stop the desire to rebel and stand out
- 60 percent said their parents were the single biggest influence on their driving behaviour
- most felt it was too late to change ingrained behaviour and 12-16 year olds were a better target market
- three groups targeted pre-drivers as young as ten years old

The reflective journals that students were required to keep during the process provide some great insights on whether or not this case study experience did provide a prophylactic to poor driving behaviours.

- 81 percent of all students still sped while completing the assignment
- 90 percent became more fixated and paranoid with their driving skill "I am beginning to dread driving"

- Many thought a “sudden death” loss of license was preferable to a demerit system
- 54 percent were no longer comfortable as passengers if the driver was consuming alcohol whilst driving
- 57 percent saw peers driving with overloaded cars as “a given”
- 53 percent now saw that friends offering to give them a lift “while pissed” showed how little their friends valued them, and were shocked by this
- 88 percent now drive more assertively near P-plate drivers
- 94 percent recorded that fear of getting caught by police was greater than the fear of death
- Most were shocked at the actual statistics about the road toll in the early driving group
- Most reported lingering heightened awareness of media coverage of crashes amongst the early driving group
- Most reported now being much more affected by witnessing or driving by car accidents
- Many think cars should be banned and public transport “is the go”
- 72 percent said “Male drivers seem significantly more aggressive”
- 42 percent of female students reported being passengers in cars driven by male drivers “speeding in suburbia” and “hand brake turning corners” showing that they loved “the power it gave over them”
- Most identified lack of integration of messages as a key problem to current campaigns

One poignant comment encapsulated the feeling of many “ I feel particularly skeptical about the ability to make an impact on the target audience, seeing that the driving habits of one of our group members hasn’t changes at all. He “who shall remain nameless” is in our target market perfectly. He is a “race boy” by nature, with an attitude that I consider repulsive and immature. He drives in a “show off” dangerous manner, and I don’t believe that will change, no matter what! He would break any law to drive like that let alone ignore warnings! Is this assignment pointless?”



## Recommendations

This was a salient process for the students. Undergoing the act of campaign production itself has had a profound impact, on the students involved. Future studies should consider a similar approach, particularly those involved in health promotion and behaviour change, which have proven particularly resistant to 'normal' mainstream advertising efforts.

Students were provided with a case study, an extensive bibliography to read, digest and add to, to inform their campaigns. From the research with 306 student producers and some 200 student reviewers, some recommendations that will help to decrease road fatalities and encourage behaviour change in the novice driver group include:

### Road safety advertising

As mentioned previously, it is vital that the creators of road safety advertising are continually re-evaluating the target group who they wish to influence. It is important that they target this group with strategies that are recognised to modify their behaviours on our roads. We recommend that road safety campaigns must examine the theory and underlying use of fear appeals, review the relationship between fear and persuasiveness, communicating effectively and select the appropriate audience to target.

We recommend at a minimum, testing on the target market, if production of campaigns by the target market is not possible. Insights about the target have proven best derived from the target as they vary substantially from current mainstream road safety oriented communications.

Our experience was that the intensive four-week production time, all completing the same assignment in parallel, produced a lovely environment for competitive idea generation. We recommend the ability for students to focus on behaviours of most import and interest to them, rather than restrict choices to a single issue, for example, wearing seatbelts or drink driving. This would invite a similar rich range of responses generated in this study, while importantly allowing many to succeed. It is also key, as students work very hard, that they can work within their interest and value set to maintain focus and commitment.

The literature shows that Australia is widely known for its use of fear appeals in road safety advertising. We urge advertisers to ask themselves is this the most effective way to target young people? Using fear appeals has shown to be effective only with some age groups and with young people, it causes them to not watch the advertisements as they are too horrific.

Certainly the outputs from four cohorts across two universities, with feedback sought from a third, resulting in a single fear based campaign, from 42, indicates strongly that this target market in unconvinced fear will work for them. We need to consider that the kinds of emotive or instructive, while not didactic, campaigns produced by this set of students hold the key to behaviour modification for novice drivers. Further we recommend the exploration of the five key theme areas:

- *P-Plate, number plate or SMS contractions*
- *Personal responsibility*
- *Gaming themes*
- *Positive reinforcement*
- *Affect on others*

We recommend those wishing to communicate effectively with novice drivers to continually reconsider what types of advertising work in changing the behaviour of young people on our roads.

Popular theory suggests that emotive/instructive combination style of advertising is most effective and needs to be credible, relevant, emotive and serious in order to change behaviour and be effective.

Insights taken from this group show that not only the message and its credibility are important but, the way the message is transmitted to or received by the target audience is also crucial. The more sophisticated media choices made by the third year cohorts should be observed, considered and adopted if appropriately matched to target audience media uses. We urge road safety advertisers to consider media choices outside the mainstream print, television and press and to consider opportunities to communicate that have an inherent close proximity to the driving experience.

This could be roadside billboards, where permissible by law, radio ads, as young people listen to the radio while driving, T-shirts for the spread of messages with cut through, that might not be palatable for mainstream media, pub and bar convenience advertising and the humble bumper sticker, read in cars while driving.

The impact of single screenings of short films and their capacity to spawn fan culture and viral spread was demonstrated through the campaign testing and outputs of this study indicate that distribution of films via cinema advertising (like those produced by the TAC Grey International collaboration in Victoria) should be considered as a media vehicle of choice, to underpin a well targeted media schedule. Noting that cinema is relatively inexpensive targeted medium, which delivers to a measurable, captive audience.

## **Enforcement**

The literature suggests that advertising campaigns are not as successful unless used in conjunction with enforcements on our roads. Extra police on our roads particularly during high risk times for young people, could aid in the saving of lives through their general presence and the threat of fines/loss of demerit points or license. All students agreed that the police presence aspect was crucial, but that a visual police presence demonstrated a commitment to road safety and 'lurking' police were more akin to revenue raising. One campaign even suggested a novel way to give the impression of policing, if budgets were tight – the roadside cardboard motion pieces of policemen flashing beacons to get motorists to slow down.

## **CONCLUSION**

Risk taking, in particular driving fast or under the influence of drugs, seems to have become commonplace in the novice driver license group. Despite monumental investments in road safety advertising and marketing campaigns, too many young drivers still die or are seriously injured on our roads. They as a group, are still over represented in fatal injury and accident figures for licenses held compared to the total driver population.

This begs the question, how effective are advertising and marketing at tempering unsafe driving behaviours? The results from our ongoing study with members of the early driving group gleaned positive and hopeful and some disturbing information for this target audience.

The researchers plan to use this sobering information as a springboard to harvest further ideas and to gain a deeper insight into the target market's behaviour, attitudes and values. It is proposed that the study be repeated and perhaps new cohorts added to gain access to a broader spectrum of insights from the early driving group.

**Four international conference papers were presented and published:**

Gray, T., Burrell, A, and Dickson, T. (2008). *Young, Fast and Dead: Experiential learning making a difference at the coalface*. 11<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Experiential Learning (ICEL) UTS. Sydney, 8-12 December, 2008.

Burrell, A, Gray, T, and Gray, B. (2007). *Less is More: Ongoing Perspectives from Young, Fast and dead*. Australian and New Zealand Marketing and Communications (ANZMAC) Conference Proceedings. Dunedin, New Zealand, 3-5 December, 2007.\*

Burrell, A. and Gray, T (2006). *Young, Fast and Dead: Ongoing Perspectives from the Early Driving Group*. 20<sup>th</sup> Australian and New Zealand Academy of Management (ANZAM) Conference Proceedings "Management: Pragmatism, Philosophy, Priorities". Yeppoon, Central Queensland University, 6-9 December, 2006.\*

Burrell, A. and Gray, T (2006). *Young, Fast And Dead: Marketing Communication Solutions To Change P-Plate Driver Behaviour*. Australian and New Zealand Marketing and Communications (ANZMAC) Conference Proceedings. QUT, Brisbane, 4-6 December, 2006.\*

\*Peer reviewed

We are advanced in the dissemination of appropriate material to academic audiences and have identified well-ranked journal to promote further discussion of the findings and our conclusions.

## Appendix One:

### Nine exemplars of excellent student road safety oriented campaigns

#### T-FACT - Time for a change

This campaign targeted the Federal Government and their 1999 pledge to decrease young driver road fatalities by 40percent by 2010.



Devised as if the students were the Australian Automobile Authority (AAA), the campaign urged the Australian public to demand more from our Government in regard to road safety, to meet this pledge, thereby saving up to 700 lives each year. The campaign took impetus from a previous labor party campaign, and called for change on our roads in terms of legislation to protect young lives.

It aimed to stimulate a set of actions that promoted safe road use and highlighted the dangers for select target markets. The target markets were: the Federal Government, via lobbying by schools and parents; 12- 18 year old school aged children, pre-drivers and learners; and young drivers 18 - 21 year old, probationary drivers.

The message was predominantly shared through radio ads and the T-FACT Time for a Change Tour, a huge truck toured Sydney, Newcastle, Canberra, Grafton, Melbourne, Shepperton, Adelaide, Perth, Darwin, Ipswich and Gold Coast, activities included celebrity talks and performances and relevant interactive displays and activities of interest to the target market to share the safe driving message. Sombre, informative radio ads, inserted in to music format station programming were designed for maximum impact. One of the greatest benefits of radio ads is the proximity to the driving experience, as most young people listen to the radio *only* when driving their cars.

**Media resource:** The T-FACTs are burned onto an accompanying CD for your listening pleasure.

**SAF : ET1 - “Live while you’re Young”**

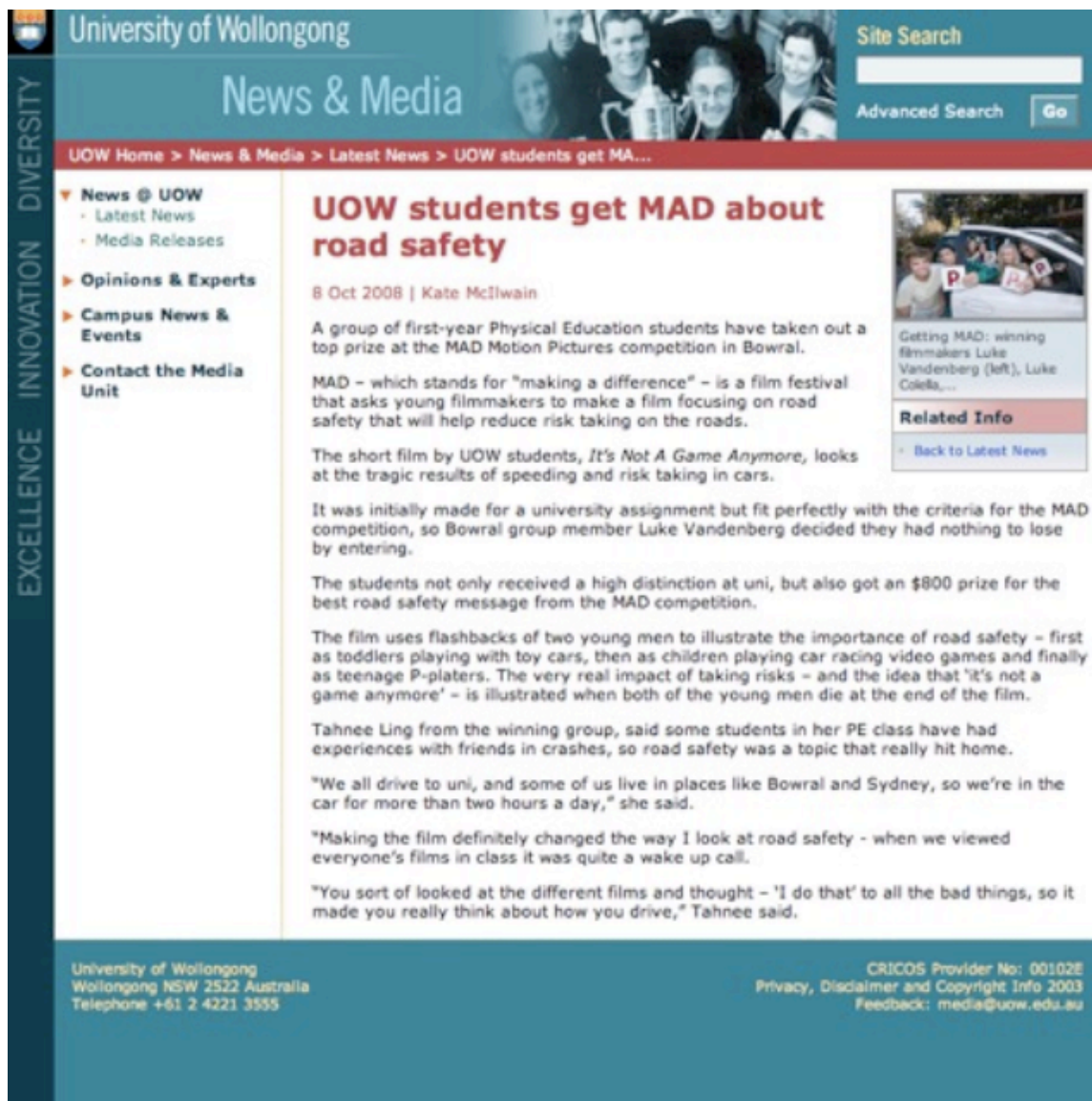


The student agency Psyc'd, for the purposes of this campaign, assumed a strategic partnership with the NRMA. Underpinned by the belief that many valuable cognitive skills which inform good driving decisions, in the moment of driving, can be 'switched on' in the passenger role, lead to a strong focus on pre-drivers (12- 14 year olds) as well as 17 -25 year old licensed drivers, their parents and high school teachers as influencers and credible sources.

Unconventional media vehicles like a compulsory educational unit to be subsumed into all high school curricula, and a traveling 'eduvan' incorporating interactive quizzes, touch screens and road system bike tracks for the younger cohort, and for the almost licensed young drivers interactive P testing systems and driver simulators were chosen to affect maximum impact. Mainstream media vehicles were restricted to radio through the Austereo network and print including music, street, car and fashion magazines.

The Psyc'd creative team had viral marketers merge with the public: in bars, cafes, music events, university hangouts to literally make 'safe' cool. The major task, to introduce 'safe' as a new hip, cool, fun word like 'rad', 'phat', 'sic' or 'insane'. For example *that shirt is safe where did you buy that!* This audience tailored fit was reinforced by the contracted text language tag line, following short message service (SMS) conventions. A fantastic adoption was the blurred coaster or schooner glass print RU OVA (see above), with deliberately out-of-focus text, to challenge the drinker's perception of sobriety and fitness to drive.





Students transcended self-imposed limitations when faced with this challenging task. Like bungee jumpers, they must step into the unknown and trust their ability to execute the task.<sup>1</sup> An example is the in the first year task: *Young, Fast and Dead: Create an advertising campaign for your age group*. One group went on to win the major award at the MAD "Making A Difference" short film festival in 2008, earning \$800. This was a fantastic accolade for UOW students and validation of this creative assessment task.

The creative theme was Life Isn't a Game Anymore and shows the students, as boys, playing with matchbox toy cars on a mat with a road network on it. This is shown retrospectively, with the use of black and white to indicate a flash back, which seamlessly merges into modern day colour, which is the students, again. This time in real time, demonstrating fool hardy and risk taking behaviours that they take onto the road while driving.

As students noted:

*Making the film definitely changed the way I look at road safety - when we viewed everyone's films, it was a wake-up call. You looked at the different films and thought - 'I do that' to all the bad things ... now I think about how I drive.*

<sup>1</sup> Burrell, A, Gray, T, and Gray, B. (2007). *Less is More: Ongoing Perspectives from Young, Fast and Dead*. Australian and New Zealand Marketing and Communications (ANZMAC) Conference Proceedings. Dunedin, New Zealand, 3-5 December.

**Leave your mark on the stage ... not on the road.**



Ideas can be found anywhere, as shown by this campaign inspired by Shakespeare's "As You Like It".

"All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players:  
They have their exits and their entrances;  
And one man in his time plays many parts ..." Jaques: (Act II, Scene VII, lines 139-142)

This group through an on-campus (University of Canberra) survey of 48 candidates, identified the main motivator behind aberrant driving behaviour as attention seeking. Their campaign, an extensive print and poster effort, supported a traveling stage show, which sought to give young people other avenues to achieve their desired 'fifteen minutes of fame'. Tour locations included smaller centres like Wagga Wagga, Newcastle, Campbelltown, Wollongong, Albury, Goulburn and Canberra where the truck tour would be considered something to look forward to and be part of.

Young people, 18 - 25 years old, holding a P license, which had to be shown to validate entry, were offered the chance to compete in a talent competition with the promise of the most popular acts, as voted by the crowd, and 'fans' on the web, receiving global coverage via the campaign's website. This style of campaign 'cashed in' on the famous for nothing in particular trend, burgeoning due to the glut of reality television programs.



01.12.06



One of the options students were given during the assignment was to enact night driving curfews and peer passenger limits, although not legally in place in the ACT, if they felt it advantageous to improve novice driver mortality rates. This group chose to do so, and set the fictional date of 1st December 2006 as their campaign commencement date. Their creative message played on the benefits of the single passenger between midnight and dawn concept.

Using a teaser media strategy billboards were the first medium to roll out, with a series of messages and a countdown to launch to increase audience involvement and intrigue. Campaign messages were reinforced through irreverent print ads, with sub tag-lines like 'from 1st of December 2006 we're putting death out of business', showing the grim reaper and grave diggers outside Centrelink joining the unemployment queue. These ads ran in 'alternative' publications like Ralph, FHM, Zoo, Fast Fours, Wheels, Hot 4s and Street Machine, and more mainstream Cleo and Cosmo titles, some mocking death, asserting that it was better to get old and sick, than die young.

Bar staff uniforms were central, as were the glow in the dark, ultraviolet light activated nightclub stamps. Media vehicle choices were designed to connect with the target market, in the normal course of their day. The target markets for this group were all provisionally licensed male drivers, particularly 'rev heads', their female passengers and L-platers.

### **Life is not a Game and No Restarts**



The gaming theme has proven to be a recurrent one. Students felt that their Game Boy, Nintendo and Sony PlayStation upbringing might have contributed to wild driving being considered a natural extension of a game. What is done for sport and a competitive challenge, in a somewhat addictive fashion in the lounge room, gets played out, with deadly consequences, on our roads.

These two campaigns were initially the same, when informed of the existing 'life is not a game' theme, the second group of students produced 'No restart, you only live once', in a tutorial room, in front of a member of the research team. It took 10 minutes for them to ideate this theme and produce the first Adobe Photoshop visual. A remarkable display of creativity and the benefit of competition, as clearly the alternative message is stronger than their original plan.

Of particular note in the 'No restart, you only live once' campaign is the lanyard which was not well received by 15 students in class, feeling that, although not designed as such, it might become a 'dangly object' from the rear vision mirror in a car, thus hampering concentration. Further, the viral media choice, of adding the tag line on a clear sticker (see above right) to every computer's backspace key, on campus and in all year 11 and 12 accessed computer labs, across the country was received as one the most creative media concepts students had ever seen or considered.

## The Future of Humps



A quirky, funky rap track “a hump, a hump a hump” underpinned the future of humps. This whacky approach to road safety used a bump on the head resulting from speeding over traffic calming measures a “speed hump” and the music background reinforced the comedy message.

This campaign targeted the P-plate driver risk-taking group, and was designed to achieve cut through in the glut of informational messages the target market receives daily, by using a comedy tone. Students tested the ads on 23 of their peers, out of a cohort of 78 and at local high schools. Feedback was that on the first screening the audience didn’t really ‘get’ or understand the ad *at all*. But in terms of recall, unaided recall from a single screening was 88 percent. Further, they couldn’t seem to get the ad ‘out of their heads’, even two weeks later, and were still singing the jingle over a year later! The black humour had a powerful and lasting appeal.

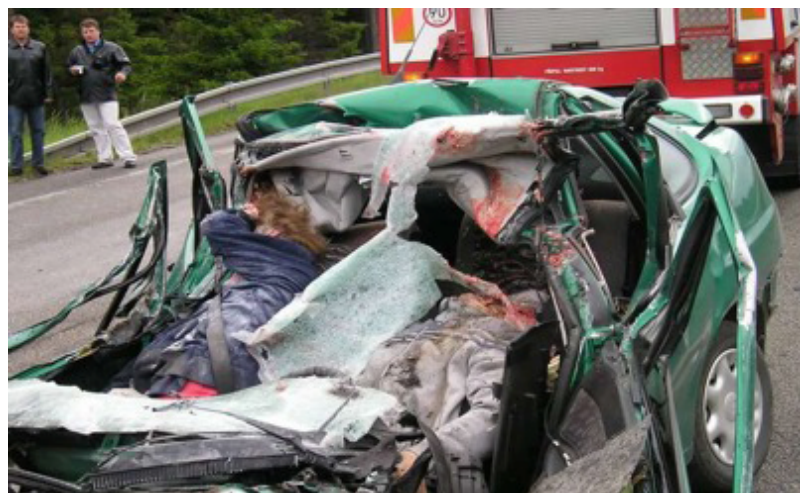
This is testament to the power of a non-threatening tone, a funky current piece of music, and an offbeat message to achieve top of mind recall in this target audience. Penetration of a message, to this level, **on a single showing**, is quite remarkable and this strategy should be heeded for future road safety campaigns targeting novice drivers.

Even, as we have established earlier, recall is a blunt measure, recall to this level at least provides a beginning for ongoing road safety oriented messages, as a piece of cerebral ‘real estate’ has been so effectively claimed.

As marketers know, half the battle is getting your message seen, to get it remembered, talked about and enjoyed is extremely powerful and potentially impactful. The key to good positioning, is to own an enduring place in the target’s mind, as compared to the competition, “The Future of Humps” success in this way was transcendent!



## Cheap thrills Kill



This team identified intentional sensation seeking or thrill seeking, as the major driver of poor driving behaviour in P- platers. They felt the target, which they identified as provisionally licensed drivers with a poor driving record, with at least one infringement, as needing to be shaken out of complacency.

This was the only fear-based campaign to emerge during the study. Both males and females 17-25 years of age made up the target audience. The message was poignant and effective with graphic TVC images accompanied by roadside billboard slogans. The “Cheap Thrills Kill” campaign was intentionally designed to elicit “action” rather than “inaction” within this dangerous driving cohort.

It was based on the premise that previous advertising campaigns have failed, so let’s try some new methods to communicate the message. The new method in this case was to *increase* the level of confrontation to above the industry norm for the message content of road safety oriented campaigns, which these students then felt, would be impossible to ignore.