

Question on Notice

No. 972

Asked on Friday, 8 June 2007

MS DARLING asked the Minister for Transport and Main Roads (MR LUCAS)—

QUESTION:

Will he provide statistics of young people injured or killed in vehicle accidents and explain how the new laws for young drivers will help save lives?

ANSWER:

I thank the honourable member for her question and acknowledge her interest in this most important subject.

As the honourable member may know, young and inexperienced drivers (17 to 24 years) are among Queensland's most at-risk road user groups. For every 100,000 young adults in Queensland, approximately 20 die in a road crash every year. This is almost three times higher than the rate for the average Queenslander and is higher still for young adults in rural areas.

Young drivers are a risk not only to themselves but to other road users, as it is not only the young drivers who are represented in the fatality figures resulting from their crashes. For instance, during 2002 to 2006, there were 561 fatalities as a result of young driver crashes in Queensland. This represents 34.9% of the Queensland road toll. Of the 561 fatalities, 252 fatalities (or 44.9%) were the young driver or rider, 160 fatalities (28.5%) were the passengers of the young driver/ rider's vehicle and 149 fatalities (26.6%) were other road users (drivers, riders, passengers, pedestrians or cyclists).

The high fatality rate of young novice drivers prompted Queensland Transport to review how it licenses and manages this group through the Graduated Licensing System (GLS).

The basic principle of a GLS is that progressively introduces new drivers to more complex road conditions as they gain on-road experience.

The new graduated licensing system has evolved from a comprehensive review of driver training and licensing and will harness the crash-saving potential of proven best practice initiatives, resulting in a significant effect on the Queensland road toll.

For example, in Sweden a trial of extended on-road practice for learner drivers reported significant reductions - up to about 35% per kilometres travelled - for novices who gained 118 hours supervised experience during the learner period. Most supervised experience was provided by parents, family and friends rather than via paid-instruction.

That's why from 1 July 2007 the Queensland Government is introducing new laws to change the licensing system for young drivers.

Key changes include:

- lowering the minimum learner age to 16 and extending the licence period to 12 months;
- compulsory L plates for all learner drivers (a black upper case L on a yellow background);
- gaining 100 hours of certified, supervised driving experience for learners under 25;
- introduction of a two-phased P1 and P2 provisional licence system;
- compulsory P plates for all drivers (a red plate for P1 and a green plate for P2);
- provisional licence holders aged under 25 years commencing the first stage of the provisional period on a P1 licence. The P1 stage will be a minimum 12 months and will have greater restrictions and conditions than the second provisional stage (P2);
- restricting all mobile phone use, including hands-free, blue-tooth accessories and loud-speaker functions, for learner and P1 provisional licence holders under 25;
- restricting mobile loud-speaker functions for supervisors and passengers of learner and P1 provisional licence holders under 25, while they are being instructed;
- peer passenger restrictions (only carrying one passenger aged under 21) from 11pm to 5am for P1 provisional licence holders under 25;
- high-powered and performance vehicle restrictions for provisional drivers under 25;
- motorbike learners will be required to hold a car provisional licence for 12 months before obtaining a motorbike learner licence;
- to progress from a P1 to P2 licence provisional drivers must pass a Hazard Perception Test (HPT) to be introduced from 2008;
- P2 drivers under 25 required to display a green P plate and comply with high powered performance vehicle restrictions;
- provisional licence holders over 25 years progressing directly from learner licence to P2 and must display green P plate for 12 months; and
- late night driving and other restrictions for disqualified and suspended young drivers.

National and international research has shown that a young driver's risk of crash, injury or death can be reduced by improving the way they are managed in the licensing system. The new initiatives will help improve the safety of all Queenslanders.