

# A Parent's Guide to the Mentor Driving Program



A community partnership program

# **A Family Guide to the Mentor Driving Program**

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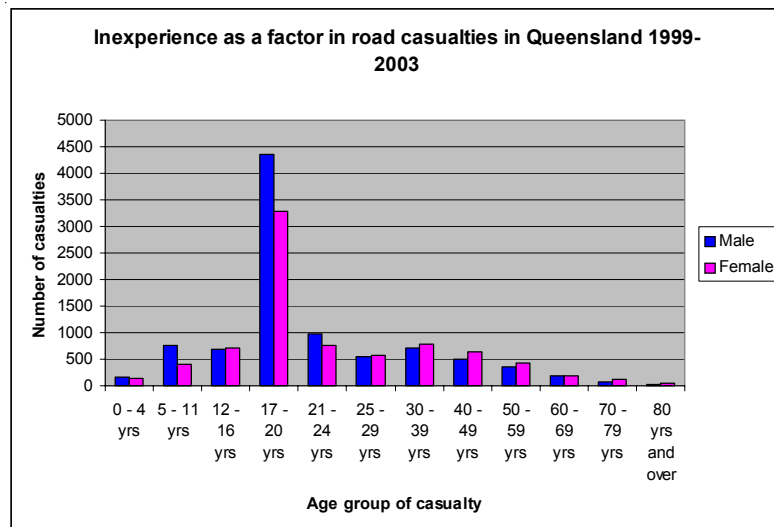
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## Section 1 Introduction to 5 Steps to Safer Driving

Research has shown that of all age groups, young drivers in the 17-20 year age group have the highest fatal crash statistics. In Queensland during the 1999-2003 period (5 years) there have been 1587 people killed on our roads. 14.5% (231 young people aged 17 to 20 years) have been killed and 4126 young people have been hospitalised. 17 to 20 year olds represent 7% of the population.

When these young road users died between 1999 to 2003, inexperience was identified as a contributing factor in 69.6% of cases.

Young drivers need a suitable quality and quantity of guided driving experience.



These startling statistics are evidence that changes need to be made. Researchers believe that increased training and experience can significantly reduce the high number of road crashes in this age group.

## **Step 1: Understanding the Learning Process**

The mentor driving program aims to give young drivers the opportunity to accumulate at least 120 hours of driving experience.

This goal is based on statistics which have shown that young drivers that receive up to 120 hours of supervised driving experience, prior to getting their driver's licence, have 35% fewer crashes than those who only received 41 to 47 hours.

Any student who has obtained their learner licence is eligible to participate in the program, provided that they have a suitable mentor to accompany them when they drive. A suitable mentor has to have an open licence and to have held it for at least one year for the class of vehicle being driven (Your Keys to Driving in Queensland, p.28).

The goals of the mentoring program are to:

1. Improve parents' understanding of why young drivers need to increase the quality and quantity of driving experience to around 120 hours before they go for their licence
2. Encourage parents and young drivers to make the maximum use of a qualified driving instructor
3. Improve parents and young drivers' understanding of how mentored practice complements formal driving lessons in building the experience that will reduce the crash risk for the young driver

## **Step 1 continued - Benefits of mentoring**

The most important benefit of participating in the program is that it should substantially decrease both the financial and emotional cost to families and the community of injuries and deaths involving young drivers.

The 'real life' driving experience, together with professional driving instruction, gives the learner driver the opportunity to reach the recommended 120 hours experience. It is hoped that this experience will help them to avoid crashes once they have obtained their licence.

We must encourage and support young drivers to take control of their driving and drive with a greater margin of safety.



The program advocates the development of appropriate experience in five driving contexts; Urban, city, freeway, country and adverse driving conditions.

## **Step 2: Decide on Options**

Mentors are designed to provide young drivers that hold a current learner licence with a chance to gain more driving experience dealing with “real life” situations. It is not suggested that mentor driving replace lessons by a qualified driving instructor, but that it provide additional driving experiences which complements the professional lessons.

Young drivers need sound instruction from a person who is not only a good driver, but also good at teaching driving skills. They need guided experience in a variety of different conditions over a period of time before they attempt to obtain their provisional licence.

Any person who has a current open drivers licence which they have held for at least 12 months is eligible to be a mentor.



### **Step 3: Development of Driving Skills**

While mentors are invaluable in enabling the learner driver to gain experience, it is highly desirable that a professional driving instructor be used to teach the required skills.

Professional driving instructors are trained to:

- teach correct driving techniques
- correct mistakes in a patient manner
- teach how to apply the road rules
- promote a safe driving attitude
- better explain how the provisional driving test will be administered

There are disadvantages to the mentor taking on the full responsibility of the instructor role. These include:

- telling the learner driver incorrect or outdated information
- passing on bad habits formed over years of driving
- failing to observe the development of poor driving practices

After all 14% of road crashes in the Southern Region are caused by drivers aged between 35 and 44 years. Driving experience reduces crash risk but it does not appear to totally compensate for faulty driving practices and events outside the driver's control.

## **Step 4: Getting the Driving Experience**

In order to utilise the benefits of increased driving experience, it is essential that the chosen mentor be effective and suited to the challenge.

The following is a list of points designed to help you reach a decision as to whether you would make a suitable mentor:

- don't start the session or continue a session if either party is emotionally upset
- plan each practice session to make sure that both the driver and the mentor know where they are going and what skills are being practised
- the mentor should point out the learner's good points as well as their faults
- listen to each other and value each other's point of view
- the learner should not be expected to drive faster than they are comfortable with
- be patient and encouraging
- have realistic expectations and let the learner know that it takes time and experience to become a good driver
- avoid overloading them with instructions while they are driving – ask them to pull over and stop the car while you explain detailed instructions
- it is illegal to have a blood alcohol content of 0.05 while instructing the learner

If you feel that you do not have these characteristics, or that you would not feel comfortable in the mentoring role, there are other options available to you. Perhaps there are other family members or friends who would be better suited and more comfortable in the mentor role.

#### **Step 4 continued - Workbook purpose:**

The workbook is used to provide a record of the experience being gained, as well as giving guidance on what to practice. The log book has been designed to be used by the professional driving instructor in conjunction with the mentor.

#### **How to complete:**

Each section of the log book has a chart which details different aspects of driving experience. Both the driving instructor and the mentor have sections to complete, this keeps both parties aware of what skills the other is practising with the learner driver. By completing each section a record is kept of the number of hours and the type of experience gained.

Whilst it may seem a fiddly and time-consuming task to complete the log book, the knowledge that your learner driver has learnt and practised all the necessary driving skills gives an immeasurable benefit – peace of mind.

#### **Workbook is complete – what now?**

Once the workbook is completed the learner driver should go through the final checklist in the workbook to determine if they have sufficient experience to attempt the provisional driving test. Once the driving test is successfully completed and the provisional licence is obtained, the workbook should be returned to Queensland Transport, together with a Statutory Declaration that the entries in the book are correct.

It is important that the completed workbook be returned so that it can be used in conjunction with other methods in evaluating the effectiveness of the mentoring program.

## **Step 5: Undertaking the Driving Assessment**

During the learning period your young driver will need your continual support and reassurance of their capabilities. Your role as a mentor makes you responsible for helping to build experience, negotiate limits and also to increase your understanding of the problems facing young drivers.

By the completion of the mentor driving program your learner should be well prepared to attempt the test for their Provisional Licence. At this time, in particular, your support and guidance can play a big part in the level of their confidence.

Once the learner driver is making all the driving decisions and reacts correctly and safely in any given situation, they are ready to attempt the test. The driving examiner is then responsible for providing an independent assessment of whether the learner driver is ready to drive on the road without supervision.

## **Section 2**

### **Program evaluation**

It is essential that a structured evaluation is done in order to determine whether the mentoring program is actually achieving the results that the participants and supporters are hoping for.

Accordingly, an Agreement/Contract is included in each log book for the learner driver to complete. This form authorises Queensland Transport to:

- contact the driver each year to discuss the past year's driving experience
- access the Government database to identify any reported crashes they have been involved in
- access their licence record and identify any traffic fines they have received

It is hoped that by comparing the results with the statistics of those who have not completed the program, the program's successfulness in reducing the number and severity of crashes for young drivers can be determined.

### **Future of program**

It is important that steps are taken to reduce the number of crashes involving young drivers. Since statistics have shown that there are fewer crashes when drivers have more experience, we believe that the mentoring program can play an important part in a brighter future for young drivers.

### **Acknowledgements**

The program would not have been developed without the hard work and commitment of the staff and P&F at St Mary's College in Toowoomba. The Toowoomba Road Safety of Queensland Transport has supported the schools aspirations and endeavoured to ensure the program would be suitable for use by other schools and communities if the program proved to be effective.

### **Contacts**

If you have any queries or concerns in relation to the mentor driving program, please do not hesitate to contact the following people:

1. Sel Rowlings  
St Mary's College Parents & Friends Association  
Ph 4636 3815
2. Malcolm McIlwraith  
Queensland Transport – Road Safety Ph 4639 0786
3. John Butterworth  
St Mary's College – Teaching Staff