

EMBARGOED until 2pm Adelaide time, Thursday 25 July 2013

## Safety needs higher priority for young drivers

Safer cars should take a higher priority when buying a vehicle for young drivers and allocating car use within families, according to University of Adelaide automotive safety researchers.

A report by the University's Centre for Automotive Safety Research (CASR) released today says the safety level of a young driver's vehicle typically is not the first priority of the driver or their parents – but perhaps should be.

"A concern that families might sometimes have is that the teenager might damage the family's primary car, and the cost of repairs and higher excesses become an issue," says report author Associate Professor Robert Anderson, CASR Deputy Director. "But perhaps families could be persuaded to consider whether the main priority ought to be the teenager's safety."

CASR looked at the relationship between driver age and access to safer vehicle technology like electronic stability control (ESC), reviewed research about vehicle choice for young people, and surveyed young drivers and their parents about car choice, knowledge about safety and the influence of car insurance on their decisions.

They found that the majority of the cars driven by under-25s were worth less than \$5,000 and the average vehicle age was 12-13 years. Very few vehicles driven by younger drivers have ESC.

"These older and less expensive cars lag behind those driven by more mature drivers in terms of the level of safety technology," says Associate Professor Anderson. "Because technologies are introduced gradually, the deficits of young drivers' vehicles persist for a long time. Unfortunately, this shows up in the crash statistics for young people."

Associate Professor Anderson says that there may be benefits in changing family thinking about which cars in the household the teenagers drive.

"Giving young people primary access to a vehicle is known to have negative impacts on their safety, possibly as much as doubling their crash risk," he says. "This is both because of increased car use and a greater likelihood of risky behaviour."

Promoting shared access to cars, he says, means young people will more often drive cars with better safety technologies, and is likely to reduce the incidence of risky behaviour. The research findings also showed that accelerating the introduction of new safety technology in new cars would be an effective way of improving the average safety of young drivers' cars in the longer term.

The report, '*Access to safer vehicle technologies by young drivers: factors affecting motor vehicle choice and effects on crashes*', was sponsored by the Department of Infrastructure and Transport on behalf of the former National Road Safety Council. It can be accessed at <http://casr.adelaide.edu.au/publications>

Media Contact:

**Associate Professor Robert Anderson**  
Deputy Director, Centre for Automotive Safety  
The University of Adelaide  
Phone: +61 8313 5888  
Mobile: +61 413 300 513  
[robert@casr.adelaide.edu.au](mailto:robert@casr.adelaide.edu.au)

**Robyn Mills**  
Media and Communications Officer  
The University of Adelaide  
Phone: +61 8 8313 6341  
Mobile: +61 410 689 084  
[robyn.mills@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:robyn.mills@adelaide.edu.au)