Enhanced training and structured lesson planning for young drivers in New South Wales

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Abstract

Young driver safety in New South Wales has improved over the past decade. The graduated driver licensing system in New South Wales is a blue ribbon system reflecting world best practice, but further developments are possible. In December 2009, New South Wales introduced a structured lesson plan program for learner drivers where 10 one-hour lessons with a professional driving instructor can be credited as 30 hours towards a minimum 120 hours learner driver logbook requirement. Driving instructors have to document the specific lessons conducted and relate them to the structured program of learning and practice as listed in the logbook. The new program developed from a review conducted by Safety and Policy Analysis International that examined means for enhancing training for learner drivers, and which was strongly influenced by European novice driver and licensing developments. In this paper, the concept of structured lesson planning for learner drivers will be outlined, and the results of a preliminary analysis of learner driver log book records prior to and after the commencement of the new program will be presented. Ongoing research over the 2010-2012 period will include the continued analysis of learner driver log book records, an analysis of the range of lessons conducted by driving instructors, and interviews and focus group discussions with learner drivers, parents and supervising drivers, and driving instructors. This paper also discusses further developments for novice drivers, including: the keys2drive program; the novice driver program; a revision of Rotary programs for young drivers; learner driver log book runs; learner driver mentoring by volunteer supervising drivers; and education programs focused on training of young drivers in the workplace.

Keywords

Young drivers, Education, Driver licensing, Learner driving, Driver training, Log books

Introduction

On November 21, 2009, the Hon. David Borger, then Assistant Minister for Transport in the New South Wales government, announced new rules for learner drivers [1]. From December 19, 2009, one hour of structured driving tuition by a professional driving instructor will count for three hours in the learner driver logbook, capped at a maximum of 10 one-hour lessons counting as 30 logbook hours.

This change to the New South Wales graduated licensing system for novice drivers meant that while learner drivers will still need to show that a minimum of 120 hours of experience has been recorded in the learner log book, those learners who seek professional driving instruction and follow the structured tuition program as part of their accumulation of experience will have the required hours of driving experience reduce from 120 hours of driving in total to a minimum of 100 hours, as 30 hours will be recorded in the driver’s log book for 10 hours of professional driving instruction.

This change was well received by road safety advocates and in the general community, as it addressed a series of problems faced by learner drivers, parents, and the professional driving instruction industry, including:  
- learner drivers not having the opportunity for sustained driving practice (supervised driving and professional driving instruction) to meet the mandated 120 hours of driving;

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provisionally licensed P1 driver, and two years as a provisionally licensed P2 driver) and a maximum period of provisional licensure of up to five years. The tenure of a learner licence was extended to a maximum of three years. A log book system was introduced, initially requiring the documentation of completion of a minimum of 50 hours of supervised driving (now increased to 120 hours). The licence classes for young drivers were subject to particular speed limits: learner licence (80 km/h), provisional P1 licence (90 km/h), and provisional P2 licence (100 km/h); and to a general requirement for display of L, P1, and P2 plates on the front and rear of the vehicle being driven.

Over the decade 2000-2010, there has continued to be modification of the New South Wales graduated driver licensing system. In October 2004, a new initiative in road safety education, 'Shifting Gears', was introduced, with all Year 9 and 10 students in government schools being taught about personal responsibility on the roads, decision-making, and crash causes. Later, restrictions on novice drivers being able to drive certain high-powered vehicles were introduced, as well as a requirement for provisional drivers who lose their licence to be able to carry only one passenger for the 12 months following the reinstatement of their licence. In addition, the L, red P1 and green P2 plates now show a driver's allowable speed limit.

In July 2007 there was additional significant reform, with the introduction of a peer passenger restriction for provisional P1 drivers under 25 years of age permitting only one passenger aged under 21 years of age to be carried from 11:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m. (a combination of night time curfew and passenger restriction). A licence suspension of at least three months applies for a provisional P1 driver or motorcycle rider licence holder who commits any speeding offence. The L and P plates must be clearly displayed on the exterior of the vehicle and adjacent to the vehicle restriction plates. There is a prohibition on the use of mobile telephones (cell phones)—in both hand held and hands free mode of operation—for learner and provisional P1 drivers and riders. There was an increase in the mandatory period of supervised driving for learner drivers from 50 hours to 120 hours, and including a minimum of 20 hours of night time driving. There was an increase in the minimum tenure period for learner drivers under the age of 25 years from six months to 12 months before they can apply for a provisional P1 licence, and an increase in the maximum length of the licensing period for learner drivers from three years to five years.

Another change came into effect in late 2008, where if a person is caught underage drinking or misusing a NSW Photo Card, then a penalty of a six month extension to the minimum period of a provisional licence is imposed [5].

Further changes were introduced late in 2009, with the introduction of structured lesson planning — the subject of this paper — and in 2010 with the commencement of the keys2drive program offering a Federally funded one-hour lesson delivered by an accredited professional driving instructor to the learner driver and a supervising driver [10].

Throughout the decade there has been a major research program — the DRIVE study - aimed at assessing the nature of young driver licensing and safety in New South Wales and the effectiveness of countermeasures to address road trauma risk [11, 12], and many research papers from the DRIVE study are now available [see, e.g., papers by Ivers, Senserrick and their colleagues: 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19]. Despite the difficulties posed by the major reforms to graduated driver licensing for young drivers in New South Wales, the effectiveness of particular initiatives for the 2000-2003 cohort of young drivers has been evaluated successfully.

The New South Wales driver licensing system in 2010 is now well structured to manage risks faced by novice drivers, and is described as a ‘blue ribbon system’ reflecting best practice in graduated driver licensing [3, 4].

Enhanced training for young drivers

Young driver safety can be addressed in two ways: one, which has been dominant in research up to now, is to reduce the factors that increase crash involvement (e.g., night driving restrictions, peer passenger restrictions,
Professional driving instructors should qualify as a three hour award for each hour of instruction, up to a maximum of ten hours tuition from a driving instructor (enhanced training, or the '3 for 1' proposal; a similar such program is in operation in Queensland [23]).

While knowledge and skill are obvious prerequisites to safe driving behaviour, the real issue for a driver within the road transport system is the capacity to make good, safe, low-risk judgments. This requires not only knowledge of the road rules but the capacity to discern the relevant details of the particular event on the road at the particular time under consideration. It is an act of practical wisdom (or prudence) that requires capacities in perception, recognition, assessment and response that go beyond the abstract or the merely skilled.

The New South Wales Roads and Traffic Authority's learning goals for learner drivers

The Roads and Traffic Authority, as with other Australian roads agencies, suggests a structured approach for the training of learner drivers to operate effectively and safely with the road transport network; based on four levels of learning goals (as summarised in Table 1):
- Building a foundation;
- Traffic skills;
- Low risk driving; and
- Building experience.

Importantly, there are great benefits to the learner driver to have the supervising driver demonstrate the driving of the vehicle through each of these levels, modeling appropriate and safe behaviours.

The learning goals form the basis for a structured and systematic approach to learner driver training, and detailed practical information about the application of this approach is included within the Learner Driver Log Book as a guide for both the learner driver and the supervising driver as to what to do and when to do it. The supervising driver is also required to sign off on the achievement of the learning goals, as well as a 'declaration of completion' stating that all learner driver driving experiences have been met. The Roads and Traffic Authority supports supervising drivers (and the learner drivers in their care) through workshops for parents and supervising drivers of learner drivers (the Helping Learner Drivers Become Safer Drivers workshops, informally known as the 'Parent GDL workshops'), which are conducted regularly across New South Wales.

It is important to note that the approach by the Roads and Traffic Authority and other Australian roads agencies reflects best driver licensing practice and reflects best educational practice for adult learning. The Roads and Traffic Authority's approach reflects the conclusions arising from the EU Project GADGET (Guarding Automobile Drivers through Guidance Education and Technology), which reviewed best practice for learner driver training, and argued for a hierarchical process involving:
- the acquisition of vehicle control skills (controlling speed, direction and position); and
- the acquisition of basic traffic skills (adapting to the demands of the present situation), and then progressing to
- the acquisition of higher-order skills in identifying and reducing risks (addressing the goals and context of driving by understanding purposes of travel, environment, social context, and work environment); and
- the acquisition of high-order skills in self-perception (leading to skills for self-control, and understanding the role of the road transport system in life) [24, 25].
The EU Project GADGET concluded that seeking to improve driver education by simply increasing the amount of training will only have limited success. Instead, explicit and well-designed methods for supporting the process of developing the necessary higher order skills are also needed. These higher levels are not accessible with teacher-centred methods like lecturing, or a longer training period; active learning methods are needed.

Practising self-evaluative and meta-cognitive skills should be included in training programs, as this offers a possibility for developing a learner driver’s post-training expertise and for reaching and modifying motives and objectives at the highest level. A general conclusion drawn from the GADGET review is that the systems that have shown safety-increasing effects are systems that have not only increased the amount of formal education and training, but introduced other components, such as graduated licensing, and increased experience through lay instruction or risk-awareness training [24, 25].

In terms of general adult education practice, the Dreyfus brothers [26], drawing on different perspectives from computer science and philosophy, described a continuum from rule-based to context-based behaviours that is widely applied, and has relevance for an understanding of the novice driving experience (see Atherton [27] for a recent critique of the model). The model describes a five-stage typology of developing expertise, with the characteristics of each stage being:

- Novice: Rigid adherence to taught rules or plans; little situational perception; no discretionary judgment
- Advanced beginner: Guidelines for action based on attributes or aspects; the situational perception is still limited; all attributes and aspects are treated separately and given equal importance
- Competent: Coping with “crowdedness”; now sees actions at least partly in terms of longer-term goals; conscious deliberate planning; standardised and routinised procedures
As noted, the Roads and Traffic Authority has developed a guide for learner drivers which is integrated into the learner driver log book, as well as materials specifically for supervising drivers accompanying learner drivers. However, Senserrick and Haworth [28], in a review of young driver research (posing the questions: where are we now, and what do we still need to know) commented:

[Our . . . findings point to areas to target in education/training of professional instructors and private supervisory drivers. There is currently a lack of much-needed guidelines for supervisory drivers on how to gain a large number of practice hours through everyday activities and how to structure this experience; i.e. about which conditions pose the greatest risk, what skills are required to address these and how to best structure and graduate the learning experience in light of these. This includes information on how to assess when the learner has developed sufficient skills at lower levels before progressing to subsequent levels.

and later:

Several gaps in this area persist, including a lack of research incorporating . . . issues as found for learners. There is still a clear need to know how best to increase and enhance the quality of supervised experienced gained as a learner, with extended periods providing the opportunity and log book systems providing examples and encouraging variety, but still not achieving adequate experience in many cases. (p.9)

Nilss Petter Gregersen [29] is one of the few researchers to examine the relationships between learner drivers, their supervising drivers (who he termed private instructors), and professional driving instructors. He analysed the effect of a combination of private and professional driver education compared to solely private instruction, using a intervention design involving nearly 2,000 17-year old learner drivers. The learner drivers were divided into two groups. An experimental group was given professionally supported education and the control group was educated by parents or other private teachers. The educational interventions comprised three parts: systematic cooperation between professional driving instructors and parents; "commentary driving" to improve scanning behaviour; and special practice to help the learner drivers experience their own limitations in driving skill. The results, based on self-reported crash involvement after solo driver licensing, showed little effect from the educational interventions, although there were indications of positive effects during the second year after licensing. As well, the results of a questionnaire survey of subjective skill and driving style showed small changes, with the experimental group who had experienced the educational interventions being a little more careful and a little less self-confident. These results are indicative, at least, that crash risks among young drivers normally educated by private instructors (such as their parents) can be reduced if complementary professional driving instruction and support are provided. It is likely, however, that the educational interventions chosen were not suitable in terms of effectively accounting for factors such as cognitive overload experienced by learner drivers and, perhaps, the learner drivers' limited capacity to benefit from the educational interventions during the first of the two years.

It seemed appropriate, therefore, for a more rigorous intervention to be available to learner drivers, addressing the range of competencies identified in the Dreyfus typology (Novice, Advanced beginner, Competent, Proficient and Expert) in a systematic and controlled manner throughout the period of learner driver licence tenure.

The proposal for an Enhanced Training Program for learner drivers

The Enhanced Training Program proposed by Faulks [2] was an education intervention that allows for the direct targeting of an individual—their knowledge, beliefs and attitudes, and their behaviour and skills—within the real on-road context where driving occurs and over the full period of learner driver licence tenure. It supports general educational efforts that bypass the need for individual action (e.g., school-based education, general community advertising and publicity)—these efforts have been described by Drummond [30] as examples of the 'coarse treatment' paradigm and have not worked well for young people as novice drivers. Specifically, the proposed Enhanced Training Program provided an opportunity for an accredited driving instructor to obtain a balanced view of many of the elements of driving competence, including:

- the focused assessment of driving skills by direct observation of driving behaviour;
intersections (obey the Australian Road Rule 67) as opposed to those drivers who do a rolling stop past the stop line before actually stopping, etc. As noted by Faulks, Drummond and Rogers [33]:

One of the key challenges when dealing with the newly licensed driver is to prevent the headlong rush to the normative behavioural standards of the majority of experienced drivers on the road that differ in many slight but important ways from the formal traffic law. Other drivers are able to cope with these standards because they have the benefit of extended experience that allows the recognition of "informal traffic laws", ... such as tolerated speeding above the posted maximum speed limit, acceleration through changing traffic signals, the determination of when is it appropriate to engage in merging and lane-changing in heavy traffic or in overtaking manoeuvres on undivided roads, etc... (p.5)

In contrast, professional driving instructors have an expert and current knowledge of road law, through their training, retesting to retain their driving instructors licence, and an ongoing process of professional development. It is driving instructors who have the teaching skills and ability to offer expert knowledge and intervention on the road with a learner driver.

It is important to recognise that studies of psychosocial factors in young driver safety have shown that children as young drivers will often emulate their parents driving behaviour, particularly if their family circumstances also include increased likelihood of traffic offending, aggression and hostility, sensation seeking, misuse of alcohol and other drugs, etc. [34, 35].

Log books

Log books are a required, formal element of the New South Wales graduated driver licensing process. Log books were introduced as a method to increase the amount of experience a learner driver accumulates before being allowed to drive alone. In particular, log books allow for the documentation of experience to be gained driving at night-time [36], which is a requirement under learner driver licensing in New South Wales. More generally, log books help to increase the understanding and support of parents and young people for the need to gain experience in driving.

Log books are also the personal diaries of drivers. The log books record a number of transitional experiences of learner drivers, from the first driving experience (which may be limited to cockpit orientation, adjustment of seating and mirrors, and learning about instruments and controls), the actual first experience of driving in control of a moving vehicle, driving on a public road, driving on major roads or in the presence of other traffic, driving at night, or driving in wet weather or other adverse conditions, etc. The log book may also record episodes of prolonged driving (longer journeys, typically for holidays or family trips). The log book also marks the passage of significant periods of driving experience (e.g., 10 hours, 20 hours, 50 hours, 100 hours, etc.), and in this sense it acts as a record of milestones in driving hours achieved by a learner driver.

There is a remarkably sparse literature to support a log book and a regime of mandated hours of supervised driving. There have been no reported studies of the Australian log book systems for learner drivers. Where studies have evaluated or assessed log books in the context of learner driving, this has been done in the context of using a log book as a method of assessing or evaluating some other aspect of learner driving or the experiences of novice drivers.

In Queensland, Solomon, King and Moore [37] reported on community attitudes to a proposal for 120 hours of driving experience with a log book (the proposal was included in a young driver discussion paper – 'Queensland youth – on the road and in control' – that was released by the Queensland Government in November 2005, providing 22 possible initiatives to reduce the high incidence of young road user fatalities on Queensland Roads). One proposal was for 120 hours of compulsory supervised on-road driving experience, recorded and certified in a log book. The log book would be checked before being tested for a provisional licence. Solomon et al. reported:
OECD/ECMT Transport Research Centre report argued that high levels of accompanied practice before licensing for solo driving (such as under supervised driving, or through professional driving instruction in the learner driver phase) would result in lower levels of road fatalities, if the driving practice is conducted in a methodical manner that involves a variety of driving situations. In a comment that remains unclear today, the OECD/ECMT Transport Research Centre report stated that while at least 50 hours of pre-licensing practice are recommendable in any system, experience in one country showed that increasing this to approximately 120 hours reduced crashes in the two years following licensing by about 40%.[41].

The StaySafe Committee [39] concluded that:

There is no evidence before the Committee that a comprehensive assessment was undertaken into the impact that increasing the required log book hours from 50 to 120 would have on disadvantaged youth. When questioned on this issue the RTA responded that: “We came down on the side that the benefits outweighed the social difficulties that would occur” (p.46)

The StaySafe Committee [39] was also concerned at issues of social equity and practicality, noting that learner drivers across New South Wales are having difficulty in accumulating 120 hours of practice driving before they can sit their practical driving test. These concerns are also being expressed in the community, for example this issue has been raised in the New South Wales Parliament in general debate and, in fact, a suggestion has been made that is similar, but less detailed, than the proposal here:

...Tonight I wish to discuss the requirements placed on learner drivers who wish to obtain a driver's licence in New South Wales. As we all know, obtaining a driver's licence is a milestone in a young person's life, an opportunity for independence and freedom, and also demonstrates a sense of responsibility. A driver's licence is a goal that many young people are eager to achieve at the earliest opportunity. ... The Government has ... [taken] measures to ensure that young drivers are more experienced before gaining their provisional driver's licence. The latest manifestation of that was when supervised driving requirements were increased from 50 hours to 120 hours. I want to draw to attention the elephant in the room relating to this issue, which is the unspoken reality of the requirement for 120 hours of supervised driving simply not being met. Parents in my electorate tell me that the requirement is so over the top and difficult to achieve that many working families are finding it impossible to find the time to provide 120 hours of supervised driving. Not for one moment do I suggest that the experience gained is not a really important requirement for young drivers to fulfil; but as legislators, we have a responsibility to ensure that laws can be adhered to. NRMA research in July 2007 showed that 84 per cent of respondents believe that the introduction of increased [hours] of supervised driving will make it more likely for learner drivers to overstate in the log book the hours that actually were completed. When people falsify records, it shows that the law is failing to achieve its objective, and that undermines a very creditable system—one that deserves to be endorsed. But there is a continuation of the original problem, namely, if people are not completing 120 hours we have drivers on the road who do not have the necessary skills. I shall give a couple of examples from my electorate of Pittwater. A number of local families have told me that they know of people who simply falsify records; they do 70 or 80 hours and simply make up the rest. In no way do I condone this, and it is something of concern. Nevertheless, we must recognise that it is happening, and something needs to be done about it. Two local people, Judy and Geoff Butcher of Newport, have two teenage sons who recently went through the driver's licence progress. They had 50 hours to do, but Geoff and Judy, who are both busy people, had to find 100 hours between them. That would be 240 hours for their two teenage sons, which would be difficult to achieve. We need to look at creative solutions to this problem. We need to have a system based on quality, not quantity. We need a system that ensures that young drivers learn the necessary skills of driving. We need a system that incorporates programs to ensure that skills are learnt, instead of simply hoping that they pick up skills in 120 hours of driving. For example, four hours of an advanced driving course, with expert tuition and putting students in emergency situations where they learn the proper handling and limitations of their vehicles, could provide 10 times the value of driving with big brother in a local car park. Yet under the existing system there is no recognition of the vastly different value of each driving experience and no incentive
Table 2: Types of assessments that a driving instructor can make through structured lesson planning based on the Roads and Traffic Authority learner driver log book

| Building a foundation | Does the learner driver and his or her supervising driver know of, and understand, the use of the learner driver log book, the role of a professional driving instructor, and the recommended process for learning to drive in New South Wales?  
| Exclusive, well-rehearsed behaviour (automatically) in operating the vehicle controls: mirror and seat adjustment; use of seat belt; operation of turn signals, windscreen wipers, heater/demister/airconditioning system, electric window controls, bonnet boot and fuel cap release; operation of entertainment systems; operation of navigation systems, reversing monitors, etc.?  
| What does the learner driver say about his or her own vehicle control and manoeuvring skills? |

| Traffic skills | Can the learner driver select an appropriate driving path?  
| Does the learner driver show effective use of observation to monitor the road environment, other road users, and vehicle controls?  
| Can the learner driver communicate appropriately to other road users (use of turn signals, eye contact, etc.)?  
| Does the learner driver proceed at a suitable speed?  
| What does the learner driver say about his or her capacity to cope with the traffic situations encountered?  
| What is the learner driver’s attitude toward disobeying road rules? |

| Low risk driving | What does the learner driver understand about choices - of when to drive, of whether to use own vehicle, travel in a private car with a group, use public transport?  
| What does the learner driver understand about social pressures in driving (running late, rowdy passengers, emotional or angry interactions with passengers or other drivers)?  
| What does the learner driver understand about driving in challenging and adverse conditions: night driving, wet weather, mist and fog, snow and ice, road construction sites, peak time commuting and other high demand driving (holiday driving, day-tripping), driving at school travel times?  
| What does the learner driver understand about impaired driving: alcohol, other drugs, driving when tired?  
| Can the learner driver demonstrate appropriate planning skills, and show insight into influence of self goals on own driving behaviour?  
| Can the learner driver identify common motives for trips that can result in risky driving? |

| Building experience | Can the learner driver discuss methods of diffusing risks before driving, for example, not driving drunk, drugged or otherwise impaired, using designated drivers for social outings) and when driving (slowing or stopping when stressed, angry or confused)  
| Is the learner driver aware of sensation seeking as a motivation for risky driving?  
| Can the learner driver discuss the influence of peer pressure and group norms on driving behaviour (e.g., frightened of looking stupid, or being labelled as scared)?  
| Can the learner driver discuss his or her own risky tendencies in driving? |
education interventions such as the keys2drive program, other novice driver programs, and the traffic offender invention program). Other actions involving the driving industry could include: the development of a communication protocol to enhance and formalise the manner in which the stakeholders involved in structured lesson planning communicate and interact with each other (i.e., learner drivers, supervising drivers, driving instructors, and the Roads and Traffic Authority as driver licensing regulator and as road safety leader); determination of program performance indicators to measure the effectiveness of structured lesson planning in achieving improved road safety outcomes and in building capacity for young drivers. Clearly, it would seem that structured lesson planning offers driving instructors greater agency whereby they can locate their professional development within their practice.

The transition from a learner drivers licence to a P1 provisional drivers licence is, of course, dependent on passing the Roads and Traffic Authority driving test. It is expected that structured lesson planning for learner drivers will have a very positive effect on pass rates for learner drivers, as successful completion of the program will, in many ways, provide an informal assessment process that is akin to the actual practical driving test. The assessment process may, in fact, be a more accurate indicator of safe driving by the young driver as the assessments will be conducted throughout the period of learner licence tenure. Writing five decades ago, Lauer [48], after estimating that an ordinary driver would encounter a situation requiring special manoeuvring only about once in 3,000 hours of driving, commented that:

Since the chance of meeting a real danger situation on a short drive is very remote, it remains a matter of doubt as to whether a person can or cannot be sufficiently evaluated or rated in 10 minutes of driving except in a rare instance. The test drive for a driver's license last from 10 to 20 minutes, hence, only about 1 out of 9,000 to 18,000 drivers would get a crucial test of his performance." (p.xv)

**PART 2: Implementation and research concerning structured lesson planning for learner drivers**

The first part of this paper has addressed the concept of structured lesson planning for learner drivers. In this second part, a research program to assess the impact of structured lesson planning will be outlined, and preliminary data discussed. A research project to assess structured lesson planning has been developed. This study will involve an analysis of learner driver log book records prior to and after the commencement of the new program. An analysis of the range of lessons conducted by driving instructors, as indicated in structured lesson planning records, will also be included. As well, interviews and focus group discussions will be conducted with learner drivers, parents and supervising drivers, and driving instructors. In a third and concluding part to the paper, further developments for novice drivers will be discussed, including: the keys2drive program; the novice driver program; a revision of Rotary programs for young drivers; learner driver mentoring by volunteer supervising drivers; and education programs focused on training of young drivers in the workplace.

**The system for structured lesson plans for learner drivers in New South Wales**

Under structured lesson planning there is a maximum limit of 10 hours with a driver instructor that can be included for additional recognition of log book hours. The total value of lessons taken with a driver instructor for additional log book recognition cannot not exceed 30 hours towards the 120 hour log book requirement. Structured driving lessons conducted at night are included as part of structured lesson planning and credited as 3 hours for 1 hour with a fully licensed instructor, but learner drivers must still complete a minimum of 20 hours of actual night time driving.

Driving instructors are required to fill and complete a structured lesson record keeper, as shown in Figure 2, and this must be stapled to the declaration of completion that forms part of the learner driver log book.
Structured lesson planning for young drivers

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<td>1-2</td>
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Figure 3: Idealised learner driver log book record under the structured lesson planning scheme, summarised by quarters (3-monthly period) from the time of issue of learners licence, showing total hours driven in each quarter and total hours driven with a driving instructor. It is assumed that the learner driver will utilise the full 10 hours permitted under structured lesson planning, thus qualifying for an additional 20 hours credit towards the minimum requirement of 120 hours driving as recorded in the log book; it is also assumed that the learner driver will successfully obtain a provisional P1 drivers licence on the first day of the fifth quarter of driving (i.e., the day after the minimum twelve month period of learner licensure had been completed).

Structured lesson plans can be retrospective, that is, lessons undertaken with a fully licensed driving instructor prior to 19 December 2009 are permitted to be recorded here (up to a maximum of 10 hours). Thus, existing learner drivers are not disadvantaged if they have undertaken previous lessons with a driving instructor. In these instances, only the date, the duration of the lesson, and the driving instructor or driving school need to be completed in the record keeper. Where an instructor signature cannot be obtained, it may be verified and signed by the regular supervising driver, and lesson hours in the log book must also be adjusted and initialled by the supervising driver.

Research into learner drivers and the log book

Earlier it was noted that the requirement for a minimum of 120 hours of recorded log book driving hours, increased in mid-2007 from a previous requirement for 50 hours of driving, has proven problematic [39]. In 2008, the Youth Action & Policy Association NSW (YAPA) conducted an online survey 'Driving You Crazy' to explore young driver issues in the wake of the changes to New South Wales driving legislation in 2007 - specifically the mandate of 120 hours of driving experience for learner drivers, and the passenger restrictions for provisionally licensed drivers. There has been no formal report written on the findings from the survey [49], but there has been limited media comment [50]. Some of the survey results are therefore presented here, as they have been hitherto unpublished, see Table 3.

Survey responses were obtained from an online survey through the Youth Action & Policy Association NSW website. In all, 460 young people, from a diverse range of backgrounds, completed the survey. The sample is skewed towards females (60% of respondents), and the majority of respondents were 17-19 years old. About 90% of respondents were born in Australia. Almost 10% spoke a language other than English, and 6.5% were Indigenous Australians. Almost half of the respondents were from urban Sydney, approximately one quarter were from regional areas and 10% were from country NSW. The rest of the participants resided outside of New South Wales. There were approximately equal numbers of learner drivers (40%) and provisionally licensed drivers (40%, with approximately equal numbers of those with red P1 and green P2 licences). Approximately fifteen percent of respondents did not have a New South Wales drivers licence, and just over ten percent had a full, unrestricted drivers licence. The main reasons given by respondents for driving were, in decreasing order of mention, work, social events, education, and family. Almost three quarters of participants reported driving mostly during daylight hours. Parents provided driving supervision for approximately 80% of participants. In 80% of responses, the parent’s car was used for supervision of learner drivers (this is despite over 70% of respondents reporting that they had their own car).
In the Youth Action & Policy Association NSW survey, the 120 hour requirement for learner drivers was not identified as a major deterrent to getting a licence. Most respondents indicated that it was either not a deterrent at all, or if it was, it was only a minor deterrent. Those who did not see the 120 hours as a deterrent either felt they had no choice but to get their licence, or thought these hours would provide them with necessary skills and experience. For those who did regard it as a deterrent, the reasons why 120 hours of driving practice was considered to be a deterrent were the difficulty in arranging driving supervision, the cost of private driving lessons, the time involved and the quantity of hours required (see Table 3).

Table 3: Selected comments by respondents to open ended questions from the Driving You Crazy? survey conducted by the Youth Action & Policy Association NSW in 2008, adapted from [49]

| Reasons 120 hours is a barrier to getting your licence | Cost: “Who has that kind of money to spend on driving?” Supervision: “I don’t have anyone to teach me to drive so I’d be spending a fortune on getting lessons. Money I don’t have!” Dramatic increase from 50 hours: “Overkill – recording 50 hours of driving experience was over the top; 120 hours is absurd.” Experience: “I think it’s a great idea to get the skill required over time.” Time: “It seems a lot of hours, particularly for someone who lives out of town, in a regional area and has to do their HSC in the year they have to do most of their hours.” “I’m way too busy for that shit.” |
| Logbook | Parental help: “My parents are supportive with getting 120 hours of learner driving.” Hassle: “You can’t always do those long trips, so after a while the short trips do become annoying”; “I got over writing hours down” |
| Lying in your logbook | Pressure on supervisors: “120 hours? Of course I’d lie, because 50 hours of lessons drove my parents crazy enough.” Felt they were competent: “because 120 hours is ridiculous. You get to a point where you can drive and you stop improving at any great length and that’s way before 120 hours.” Unnecessary for all drivers: “Because it does not take every person 120 hours exactly to become a proficient driver. Some learn faster, others may never learn.” 120 hours is “too much”; “120 hours is a joke, as if bro!” |
| Necessity of 120-hour requirement | Hours are not everything: “Making kids drive 120 hours will not stop them from becoming a P-plater who packs their car with friends, speeds, and then kills themselves and/or their friends by hitting a tree or power pole. Experience is nothing when stupidity comes into play.” “I don’t doubt that it has helped decrease young driver fatalities... But the majority of car accidents involving young drivers are caused due to speeding under the influence, and that has more to do with the choices they make than the number of hours they’ve written in a book.” Good experience: “we need experienced drivers on the road.” Doesn’t take into account individual circumstances: “I think they need the experience in driving in all conditions, but it doesn’t take into account those people who don’t have access to a car or teacher” Driving test is a better indicator: “Drivers need to be good, but if you can pass the test, then obviously you are good enough.” Prioritises quantity over quality: “Excessive. Onerous. Does not look at competencies just quantity.” |
### Figure 6: Log book records of learner drivers, summarised by quarters (3-monthly period) from the time of issue of learners' licence, showing total hours driven in each quarter and total hours driven with a driving instructor. Note that Case study 1 obtained her provisional P1 drivers' licence part way through the eighth quarter of driving, while Case study 3 obtained his provisional P1 drivers' licence on the first day of the fifth quarter of driving (i.e., the day after the minimum twelve month period of learner licensure had been completed). Case study 2 held a learner drivers' licence for just over four years.
PART 3: Structured lesson planning and other novice driver safety initiatives

In this concluding part to the paper, further developments for novice drivers will be discussed, including: the keys2drive program; the novice driver program; a revision of Rotary programs for young drivers; learner driver mentoring by volunteer supervising drivers; and education programs focused on training of young drivers in the workplace.

Structured lesson planning provides an example of an action taken under the Safe System approach to reducing road trauma within the road transport system that is supportive rather than coercive in nature, unlike some more prominent actions such as increases in penalties for traffic offences and the introduction of traffic policing measures such as covert mobile speed cameras to address illegal speeding behaviour by motorists [51].

In fact, there are a number of current initiatives in New South Wales that are expected to further enhance the safety of novice drivers—both learner drivers and provisionally licensed drivers—through supportive programs. These programs have been discussed elsewhere [3, 4, 5], and include: the keys2drive program; the novice driver program; a revision of Rotary programs for young drivers; learner driver log book runs; learner driver mentoring by volunteer supervising drivers; and education programs focused on training of young drivers in the workplace.

For those road safety practitioners interested in novice driver safety, the introduction of structured lesson planning in New South Wales is but one of a number of exciting programs being developed and implemented.

Under the keys2drive program, the federal Australian government is funding a one hour lesson for learner drivers to be delivered by a driving instructor, provided that a parent or other supervising driver is also present. As Jerrim [10] has noted, the aim is to build a working relationship involving the learner driver, supervising driver and driving instructor so that all can become familiar with the concept of a methodical and appropriate curriculum of instruction for the training of a novice driver [10]. The keys2drive program is now available in New South Wales.

Since 2004, work has been progressing on developing a Novice Driver Programme Trial (originally involving the federal Australian government, and the Victorian, and New South Wales governments). Under this trial program, provisionally licensed drivers would receive post-learner training (classroom and on-road) within the known high risk period for crashes (0-6 months after provisionally licensure) [52]. The trial has yet to commence.

A particularly important paper was published late in 2009 by Senserrick and her colleagues, based on the DRIVE study [16]. This study reported that current driver education programs can range from being ineffective through to being a powerful means of reducing road trauma affecting novice drivers. They compared participation in a 1-day workshop-only program focusing on driving risks (“driver-focused”, the RYDA program, based on the U-Turn The Wheel program developed by Rotary, see Faulks & Irwin [53]) and a whole-of-community program also including a 1-day workshop but also longer-term follow-up activities and a broader focus on reducing risk-taking and building resilience ("resilience-focused", the RRISK program - Reducing Risk, Increasing Skills and Knowledge - developed by NSW Health), linking participation with subsequent police-reported road crash and traffic offence data. Senserrick and her colleagues found that the, the resilience-focused program (RRISK) was associated with a 44% reduced relative risk for crash involvement, but the driver-focused program (RYDA) was not associated with reduced crash risk. This very large effect size seen for RRISK suggests that driver education programs that focus more generally on reducing risks and building resilience have the potential to reduce crashes. However, traffic offence rates did not differ between those young drivers who had completed the RYDA or RRISK programs. Police enforcement tactics and policies may have influenced this finding, but the causal factors involved remain unknown. In response to this finding from the DRIVE study, and a similar finding in 2005 reported by Elkington for the RYDA program [54, 55], there is now strong interest in the RRISK ("resilience-focused")


8. I J Faulks, Revamping the New South Wales graduated driver licensing scheme for young drivers. Invited paper presented to a conference to investigate the possible introduction of graduated driver licensing scheme for young drivers in Sweden, 6-7 October 1997. Borlange, Sweden: Swedish National Road Administration.


