

Parental policing: what are mums and dads doing to encourage safe driving?

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Parents of P-plate drivers in the ACT are being asked to take part in an online survey. Credit: Queensland University of Technology

Parents are vital in encouraging their children to obey the road rules and young drivers are keen to show their parents they can be trusted behind the wheel, according to results of a QUT road safety study.

Dr Alexia Lennon, from QUT's Centre for Accident Research & Road Safety – Queensland (CARRS-Q), said parental support was an important part of how young novice drivers navigated the ACT's Graduated Driver Licensing program and [parents](#) may have a greater influence on enforcing driver restrictions than police.

"However, little is known about parents' views or experience and how much they can effectively guide provisional drivers in the ACT," Dr Lennon said.

"Understanding how parents support young P-plate drivers and encourage them to obey the road rules and comply with provisional licence restrictions is essential to improving the GDL system in the ACT."

Dr Lennon said a small but in-depth study of parents and young drivers in the ACT had shown novice drivers were more likely to comply with the GDL system when encouraged to do so by parents rather than police.

"But the important question is do parents know all the restrictions of the GDL system and if not, how do they guide their children to be safe on the road?"

"What we found was that broadly speaking the knowledge of restrictions was strong. All parents were aware of zero alcohol limits and mobile phone use, but they were less certain when it came to other rules and often had their own rules, which we now want to explore further."

Dr Lennon said young newly-licensed drivers were at a higher risk of being involved in a crash than any other age group and two-and-a-half times more likely to be killed in a crash.

"The GDL system is designed to address this by limiting novice drivers' exposure to high-risk situations, while allowing them to gain on-road experience," she said.

"In the ACT the GDL system, which includes P-plates, is less restrictive than other states but it does provide education programs to encourage awareness of behaviours that increase crash risk and the need to comply

with the restrictions imposed."

Dr Lennon said the next stage of the research project was to use an online survey to measure the effectiveness of what parents were doing to encourage their P-platers to comply with provisional licensing conditions.

"Understanding what is easy or difficult for parents to enforce and the success they achieve with their approach to encourage safe, lawful driving is necessary to help them better protect their teenage drivers."

QUT researchers are looking for ACT parents of P-plate drivers or those who have held a P-plate licence within the last three months to take part in an online survey.

"There are no right or wrong answers, just questions about individual experience that will help guide improvements to the GDL system and in turn may save lives of young drivers in the future."

To take part in the survey, visit www.qut.edu.au/about/news/news?news-id=102672

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