

Title: Helping hand, equipping parents to tackle the learning to drive process

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Abstract

The evidence is clear that novice drivers are among some of the most vulnerable road users within the community. Research suggests supervised driving hours may be an effective way to reduce the crash risk for this road user group.

A venture between School Drug Education and Road Aware and the RAC aims to highlight this protective factor in the *Keys for Life* workshop.

This education workshop attended by the parent and their learner driver, models best practice as it links directly to a classroom based pre-driver education program that reinforces the benefits of extensive driving practice. It also adopts a partnership approach engaging schools, parents and the wider community.

In most families, driving supervision is undertaken by a parent. Recognising the role of parents in the learning to drive process and their ability to positively influence their teenager's road use, the question to be asked is "how can we make supervised driving practice as effective as possible"?

Keys for Life equips the parent with the knowledge and skills to confidently tackle teaching their teenager to drive. Planning and using a step approach to driving practice and dealing with difficult driving situations are topics covered in the workshop.

Keys for Life has had an overwhelming positive response from WA school communities and data indicates an increased reach and participant confidence.

This presentation will outline a model for successfully supporting parents and young drivers in the learning to drive process.

Introduction

Researchers agree young drivers are over represented in road deaths and serious injuries. As they represent only a small proportion of licensed drivers they are among the most vulnerable road users within the community (Franks Papakosmas 2010; Simons-Morton & Ouimet 2006; Senserrick & Haworth 2005).

In an effort to reduce the crash risk for young drivers, a Graduated Driver Training and Licensing System (GDT&L) was introduced in Western Australia. Through this system learner drivers do not rush through their driver development and are provided with sufficient time to experience driving in a wide range of situations whilst being supervised and exposed to a very low crash risk. "Preliminary research in Victoria since the introduction of a minimum of 120 hours suggests the more complex driving situations may not be experienced until the Learner has had considerable on-road time; typically not until 90 hours or more" (The George Institute, 2011). However more needs to be done to assist young drivers and Harrison (2010) suggests there is "potential for parents to play an active role in risk-reduction strategies."

Supervision of the learner driver, in most families, is usually undertaken by a parent however Franks Papakosmas and Noble (2011) found "parents struggled with confidence, competence and communication while acting as driving instructors" and that "young people appreciated patience, knowledge and compliance with road rules." In order for supervision of young drivers to be effective as possible, it is therefore essential to equip parents with knowledge and skills to raise their confidence and communication skills.

***Keys for Life* program**

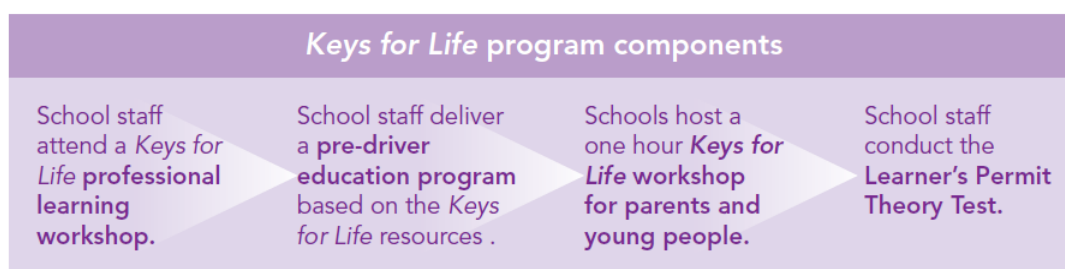
The *Keys for Life* program is a pre-driver initiative of School Drug Education and Road Aware (SDERA) and is designed for Year 10 to Year 12 students and their parents/carers. The aim of *Keys for Life* is to promote supervised driving practice; develop positive road safety attitudes; inform decision making; and involve parents and the community.

Youth road safety is a significant concern for parents and the community requiring school-based staff, parents and agencies to reinforce safe road safety messages to achieve effective pre-driver education. *Keys for Life* aims to involve as many young people across WA as possible and support parents and community agencies in pre-driver education.

Keys for Life: A Workshop for Parents and Young People – a partnership approach

The *Keys for Life* workshop is a component of the *Keys for Life* program. The workshop focuses on motivating parents and young people to gain extensive, supervised driving experience and create a partnership between the parent and young person whilst learning to drive. The workshop also aims to reduce anxiety and improve parent confidence levels. The free 60 minute workshop, attended by the parent and their learner driver, is delivered by the RAC to

metropolitan schools and by SDERA consultants to regional schools, participating in the *Keys for Life* program.



Picture 1: Components of the *Keys for Life* program

In accordance with Principle 13 and 15 of the *Principles for School Road Safety Education* (SDERA, 2009) the aim of the partnership between SDERA and RAC, which commenced in 2003, is for both agencies to work collaboratively to provide road safety education to parents and young people during the learn to drive process.

Workshop content

During the workshop, parents are introduced to the concept of extensive supervised driving (well above the minimum of 25 hours) and tips are provided on how to increase hours of practice. Workshop attendees also receive a take home pack containing a set of L plates; a practice planner; and a “Let’s practise” booklet containing useful tips and information.

Waller (2003) in Faulks (2009, p15) mentions educational principles such as learning over time and extensive supervised practice, slowly progressing from simple to complex conditions, should be followed to address the crash risk of young drivers. In addition to providing information on the WA Licensing System; tips for successful and safe driving lessons; the role of the supervisor and tips on choosing a car; the following four stage approach is provided in the *Keys for Life* workshop which aligns with Waller’s recommendations.

Stage	Description
Stage 1:	This stage is all about learning the basic skills and how to control the car. It aims to get the learner to start, stop and steer safely in quiet areas without traffic.
Stage 2:	This stage is about applying new car control skills and learning how to scan the road for hazards on quiet roads.
Stage 3:	This stage is about using the Stage 1 and 2 skills on busier roads and learning how to control the car in different traffic conditions. Learner drivers need to deal with traffic and other hazards and make decisions to keep themselves and other road users safe.
Stage 4:	This stage is all about the learner driving as if they were alone in the car. The L plates are on the car and the supervisor is sitting next to them. The learner driver will have to interact with the traffic and make most of the driving decisions with the supervisor’s help.

Table 1: Learn to drive in four stages

Results

Since the introduction of the *Keys for Life* workshop in 2004 its popularity has steadily grown to just under 2500 attendees last year. With some schools experiencing over 300 people at a single event, teachers, parents and learner drivers alike have welcomed its cooperative approach to learning to drive.

From 2007 RAC has continued to deliver the workshops to more than 1750 people in the metropolitan area each year.

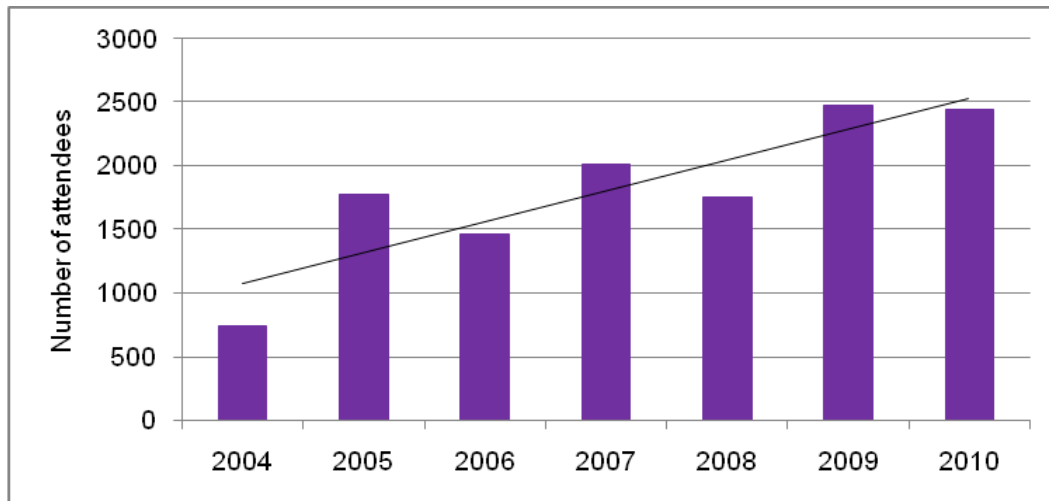


Figure 1: Attendance figures for workshops delivered by RAC within metropolitan WA. Note: 2009 attendance figures show the expected attendance rather than actual attendance. In 2008, 82% of expected audience attended the workshops and in 2010 this increased to 88%.

Feedback from parents shows they generally attend the workshop to better understand the Graduated Driver Training and Licensing System. Parents also indicate interest in learning different strategies so they feel more confident when the time comes to teach their son or daughter to drive.

Feedback results for the previous two financial years are shown below.

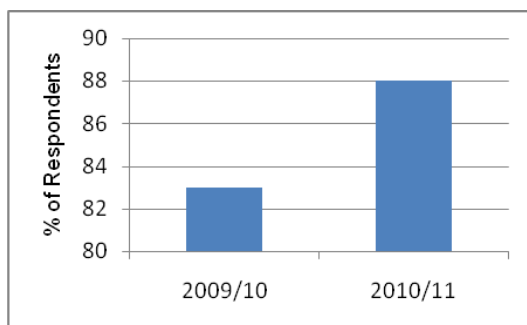


Figure 2: Parents that feel confident in teaching their young person to drive as a result of attending a one hour parent workshop.

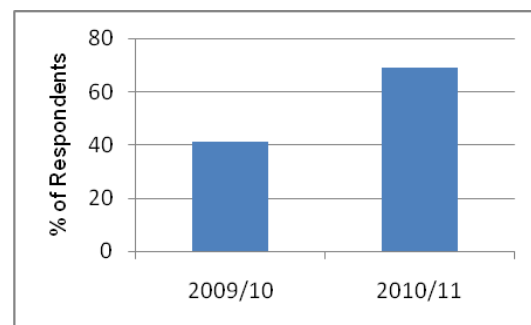


Figure 3: Parents intending to supervise their learner driver for 100 – 120 hours.

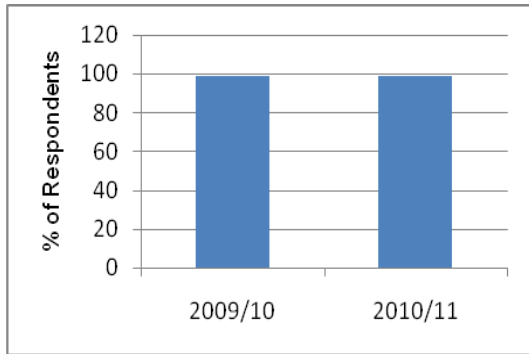


Figure 4: Participants understanding the benefits of supervised practice.

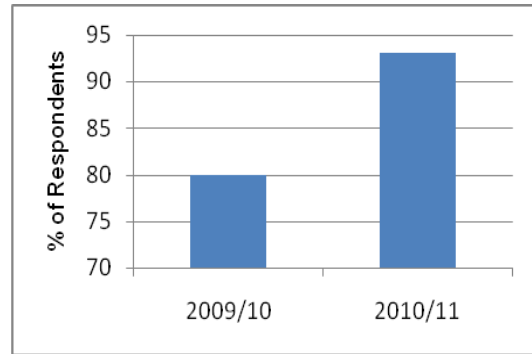


Figure 5: Participants that understand the licensing system.

Parents attending the workshops have provided many positive comments, a selection of which are shown below:

“Thank you for providing such a useful program for both the learner driver and the parent”.

“Thank you for increasing parental involvement in relevant road safety issues for young drivers”.

“A fun and informative presentation. Well done”.

“Thank you for making me more aware of the importance of being a driving supervisor and a role model”.

Since commencing the *Keys for Life* workshop, an upward trend has been observed not only in audience numbers but also in the number of workshops delivered as shown in the graph below.

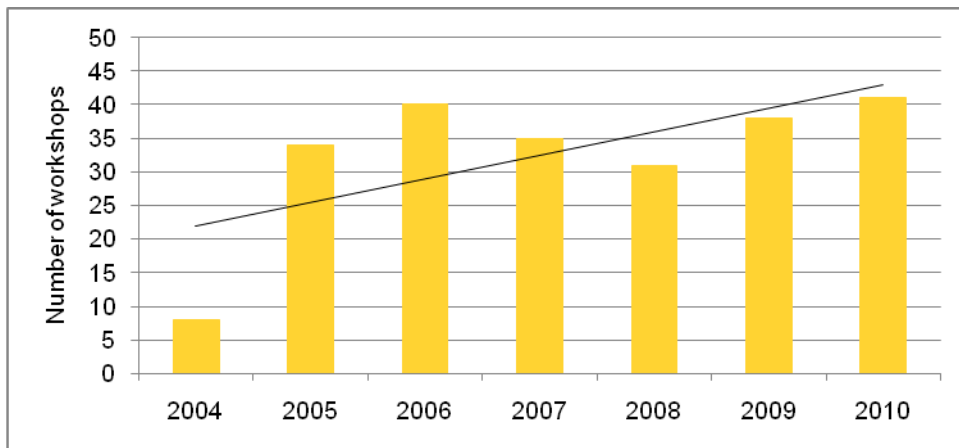


Figure 6: Workshops delivered by RAC within metropolitan WA.

The workshops conducted by RAC are held not only at metropolitan school premises but also at the RAC office. Ordinarily approximately one workshop per month is scheduled at RAC premises to enable any new learner and their supervisor to attend the workshop (not just those learners whose school is providing the *Keys for Life* program). In 2011 the popularity of the workshop has increased and in the six months to June 2011, additional workshops were

held in January, February, March and June totalling nine workshops for the year to date with another 5 scheduled for the year.

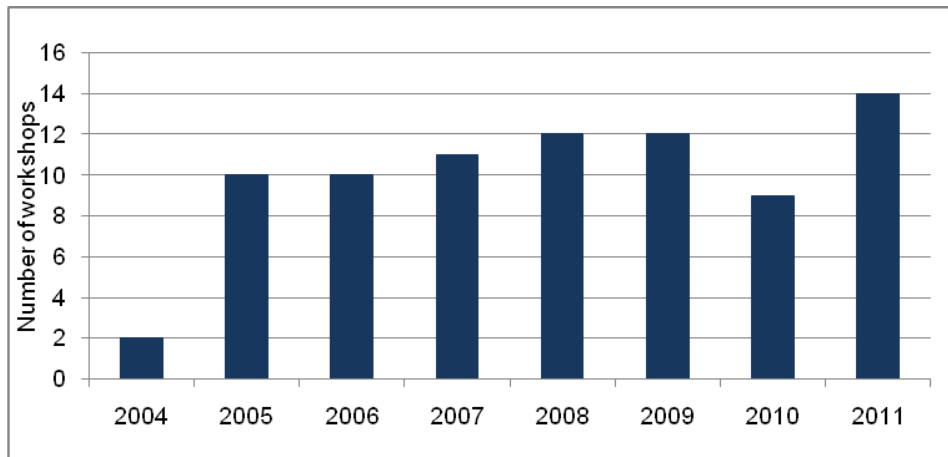


Figure 7: Workshops delivered by RAC at RAC premises.

Workshops have been held in regional WA town centres since 2009, these are conducted by SDERA consultants and show rapid growth in the number of workshops held.

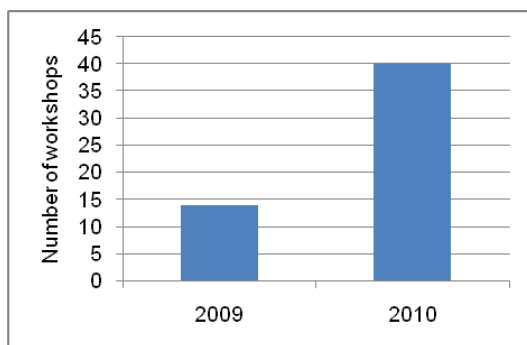


Figure 8: Workshops delivered by SDERA consultants in regional WA.

A review of the workshop held prior to 2009, demonstrated that parents were positively impacted by the workshop as evidenced by the results below:

- 99% of survey respondents either strongly agreeing or agreeing with the statement “Having attended the workshop, I now feel more confident in assisting a learner driver with supervised driving practice”. Parents felt the information provided during the workshop enhanced their knowledge on driving issues and gave them the reassurance that they could assist their son or daughter in learning how to drive.
- 97% of survey respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that increasing the number of hours of supervised driving practice enhances the safety of a learner driver. Parents/supervisors identified the link between an increase in driving

confidence/experience and increased hours participating in supervised driving.

- Approximately 43% of respondents intended to achieve between 100-120 hours of supervised driving with their learner driver. In contrast, approximately 21% of students/learner drivers intended to achieve 100-120 hours.
- Approximately 20% of respondents intended to achieve more than 120 hours of supervised driving with their learner driver, which was similar to the student/learner response.
- Approximately 25% of students/learner drivers intended to achieve between 75 -100 hours of supervised driving hours.
- Overall, parents believed the involvement of parents/carers/students in the *Keys for Life* workshop and the knowledge obtained during this workshop, makes a strong contribution to improving road safety outcomes.

Conclusion

Research shows that road safety education can be more effective when schools, parents and communities work together to provide a comprehensive, whole-school approach addressing health issues within the school community (Health Promoting Schools Framework, World Health Organisation 1986).

Harm minimisation for road safety is best achieved through consistent, quality-delivered education. Schools implementing *Keys for Life* are encouraged to involve parents and community agencies to reinforce messages by engaging guest speakers to enrich the program, use parent information sheets and, where possible, host a *Keys for Life* workshop.

The *Keys for Life* workshop aims to increase parental awareness and knowledge of the main risk factors for young drivers such as distraction, fatigue, drugs and alcohol and inexperience.

An effective model:

- Instils parent confidence in teaching a young person to drive;
- Increases the hours of logged and supervised driving for learners;
- Improves parent and young driver understanding of the Graduated Driver Training and Licensing System;
- Requires a whole community approach;
- Uses a staged approach to supervised practise.

A comment by a learner driver “if mum just sat me down and said it calmly instead of screaming at me, I would probably take it in more” (Franks Papakosmas and Noble 2011) highlights the need to overcome the breakdown in communication between the parent and the learner driver. The *Keys for Life* workshop does just this.

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