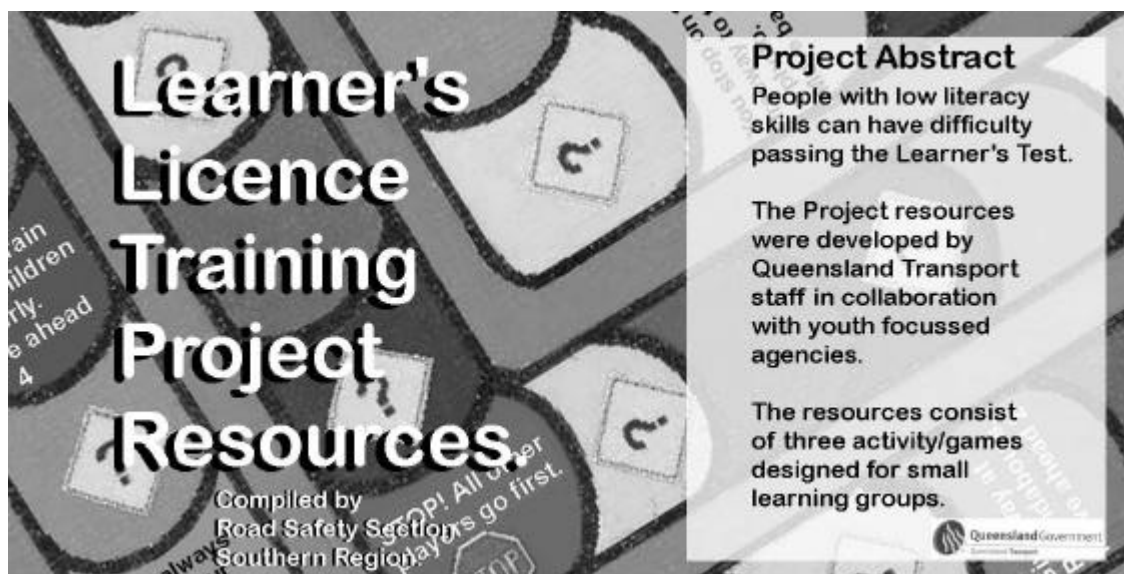


Learners Licence Training Project



CD ROM Cover

1. Introduction

The project started early in 1996 when Road Safety Section were asked to assist the Cherbourg community members unable to pass the written learners licence test. These people were failing because they did not have adequate literacy skills to learn the materials (in available text format) or pass the written test. The experience we gained through running training sessions and testing for these clients was used to develop the community driven training processes and activity based resources discussed in this paper.

As the user friendliness of the resources (see section 5.1, 5.4) improved it became easier to share the concept and resources with interested agencies. We tested the prototype resources with these agencies in line with their specific needs and the response was a flood of great ideas: A poster turned into multiple discussion cards; Cards were colour coded into families; text was simplified and in many cases replaced with pictures or diagrams.

Late in 2000 we had the three activities ready to trial with a wider audience. Queensland Transport's Community Programs and Information Branch came on board as partners and are undertaking a state wide trial of the resources. To guide the further development of the project we formed a reference group which included staff from special education units, youth justice programs, a correctional centre, youth employment agencies and neighbourhood centres.

2. Guiding Principles for Project

Right from the outset we worked to support community agencies assisting clients with low literacy skills to pass their learners test. We listened to the aspirations of individuals and agency representatives. In response the concepts for learning activities were changed, layouts modified and sections were enlarged or reduced in size.

It was always a grassroots operation where people gave of their own time and did not refrain from using zero dollar options whenever possible. We acknowledged warmly the voluntary efforts of people who worked with a "Do It Yourself" approach to enhance ownership and keep costs down. The project also had a flat hierarchy where the Road Safety Consultant was the chair for the process but decisions were made to meet the needs of community agencies and their clients.

The Project Team endorsed the need for independent and impartial evaluation. We needed a solution for our communities quickly. Initial research resolved that the problem was a community held problem and that evolving solutions could be tested against reality. At one stage we changed a venue and almost nobody

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attended until we corrected the error. We have always talked in terms of evaluation however the data collected during the development phase has been rudimentary. Data has been restricted to numbers of attendees and successful applicants at one site and anecdotal feedback from reference group members at other sites.

Opportunity exists for some retrospective surveying of participants.

Critical success factors were seen as – (success exists when)

1. Community based agencies choose to use the processes & resources
2. Participants pass rate reflects positively on the effectiveness of process
3. Participants who fail first time come back to repeat the process
4. When the approach is sought out by agencies that are able to use it.

3. The Foundation Experience - Cherbourg / Cunnamulla

A Queensland Transport Driving Examiner, Graham Gilroy, commenced the training and testing work at Cherbourg before our time. He assisted the community to establish a driving school and he conducted learner Licence Tests in the community. The community invited Road Safety to carry on the Training and Learner Testing process when Graham left the district. We started in Cherbourg Aboriginal community in early 1996. The community is situated in the South Burnett Region, 175 km north west of Brisbane and has an overall population of around 3000 indigenous people who live in either Cherbourg, Murgon (a few Km down the road) or in near by towns.

Since commencing, we have trained over 500 local people. In an ongoing attempt to improve the pass rate we developed training aids and processes that worked with our clients

After initial experience with Cherbourg we also worked with representatives from the indigenous community in Cunnamulla. This work introduced the challenge of translating our fledgling ideas so they could be facilitated by community groups with no training in road safety education. Clients who have been unable to pass independently require the support of family or a community agency, and flexibility from local licensing authorities for the problem to be resolved. The reality for many remote communities is that agency staff turnover is high so the process and resources need to be usable without prior training. As the resources are designed for group use we did not initially expect families to find them useful for one to one training. (we have been proved wrong on many occasions.)



Community members from Cunnamulla worked on producing a canvas poster on the give way rules.

4. Reference group formed from Youth Agencies

By late 1999 we had developed a resource kit (see also section 5.1) of three training activities which were designed for group learning situations. The resources attracted interest from people outside our Region. As a consequence the Road Safety Consultant was invited to Brisbane to present the prototype resources to a group of over 20 representatives from youth focussed agencies in South East Queensland. Many of the people expressed interest in the further development of the resources so we took the opportunity to form an “Industry Reference Group” for the project.

The reference group met in Toowoomba shortly afterwards and included representatives from:

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| ?? Youth Justice Service | ?? Toowoomba State High School Special Ed Unit |
| ?? J-Pet | ?? John Oxley School |
| ?? Mission Employment | ?? H Help for Independent Living |
| ?? Lifeline | |

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As the resources reached a stage where they could be circulated on a CD ROM, other groups showed interest and were given an opportunity to comment on the training materials. Groups consulted include:

- ?? High Schools
- ?? Driving schools
- ?? Correctional centres
- ?? Employment agencies
- ?? Police liaison officers
- ?? Disability support groups
- ?? Migrant placement groups
- ?? Other community groups.

5.1 Developing a clear focus for the Project Resources

The project team found through experience that people with learning difficulties who were committed to passing the test, appear to become quite pragmatic about what material they would try to learn. They only want to learn material that would directly help them achieve their goal to pass the test.

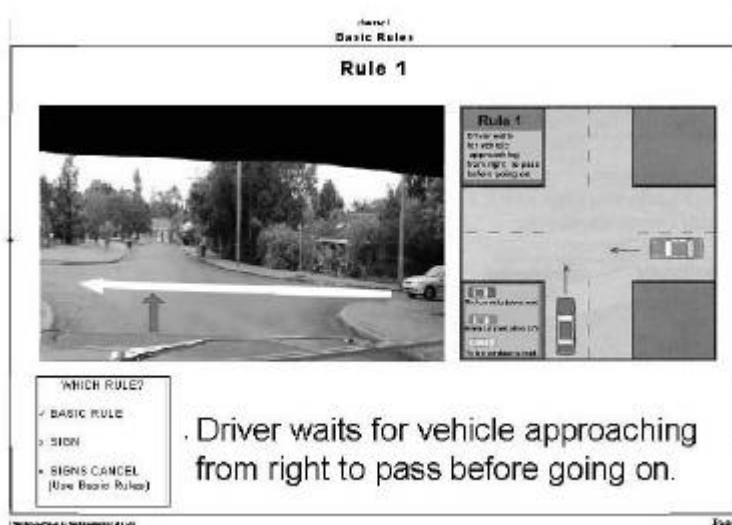
It was therefore apparent that the learning resources needed to have a clear and unambiguous connection with the test process. The project team achieved this by taking the three natural breaks in the current *Queensland Transport Test Sheets (30 questions)* and developing three corresponding learning activities.

?? *The first 10 questions* in the test are about giving way at intersections so we developed an activity for learning the relevant give way rules.

?? *The second ten questions* ask the meaning of road signs. We developed a card game to help make learning these meanings more interesting.

The third ten questions are general questions. We developed a board game that helped players learn the material in a non-competitive and low risk activity. This material is diverse and there is still a good deal of scope for improving the user friendliness of the concept and material.

5.2 Group Training Approach and Structure of Resources



Discussion card from Activity 1 explaining basic give way to right rule.

One aspect of the resources that worked well was the way in which the activities encouraged ownership by giving participants access to the answers up front. Experience demonstrated that people would work hard to solve problems when they knew they had been given the responsibility of assessing their own answers.

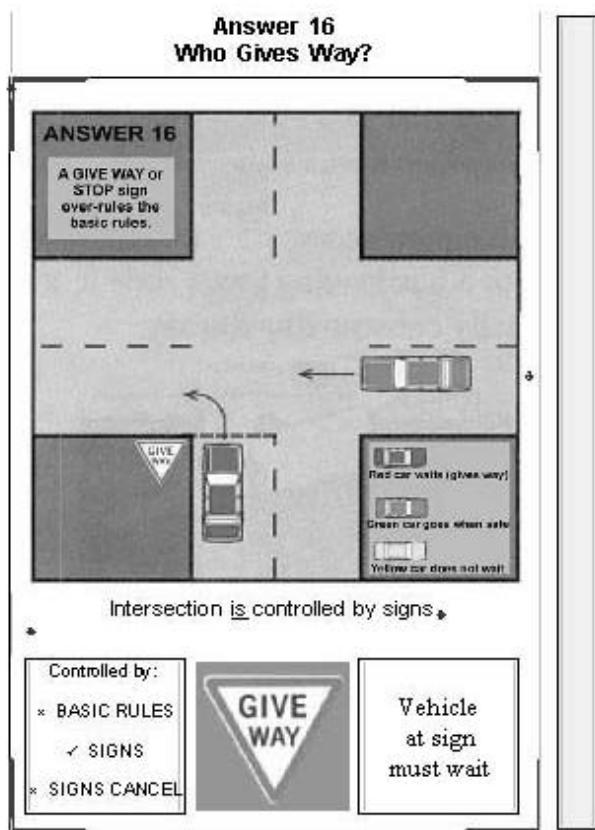
The activities make the maximum use of structure, photographs, diagrams and symbols to make the information easier to understand and remember. Sections are colour coded and broken into smaller chunks to improve comprehension and memory.

Because the roots of the project lie firmly in the aboriginal community we chose to capitalise on the strengths of group learning. This learning style provided an opportunity for individuals to utilise their strengths and avoid possible embarrassment caused by low literacy skills, incorrect answers or communication difficulties (i.e. vocabulary).

The approach also allowed for an external facilitator. This can be very helpful when groups have no members willing to take on this guiding role.

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5.3 Agency staff as facilitators



Sample of Answer sheet in Activity 1.

Our experience suggested that people with low literacy skills or other learning difficulties were not well positioned to utilise learning strategies that required the person to have independent learning skills. We therefore avoided computer driven activities that might be poorly suited to this client group.

It has proved to be quite common for the people who are having difficulties achieving a learners Licence to already be in contact with a community agency because of unemployment, a disability, a justice issue or a work for the dole program. The resources have proved useful for achieving one or more agency goals such as improving self esteem, employability or assist with language and literacy skills.

5.4 Three Learning Activities to suit current Qld. Learners Test.

The activities have been structured to prepare applicants specifically to sit the Queensland Learners Licence Test. (see the table below). The three activities provided the information required to be able to answer the respective questions on the learners licence test paper.

Test Questions cross referenced to Training Activities			
Old Learners Test	Test Layout	Participants Goal	Activity
Questions 1- 10 Who give's way at intersection.	Intersection diagrams.	Get 9 out of 10 questions right.	Activity 1 Discussion Cards with diagrams, photos and text, sample questions and answers.
Questions 11- 20 Road Signs	Images of signs with multiple-choice answers.	Get 18 out of 20 questions right.	Activity 2 2 Card games, one for advisory signs, one for regulatory signs.
Questions 21 - 30	Text based questions with multiple-choice answers.		Activity 3 A collaborative board game.

5.5 The Question of Group Testing

Group testing has taken place at Cherbourg on many occasions and in Cunnamulla on one occasion. The experience was very positive and lead the project team to believe that group testing in a community setting greatly improves participation and willingness on the part of individuals to repeat the process if necessary. The main benefit seemed to be reducing the negative impact that testing venues generated. Testing among peers and in a community setting seemed to reduce the negative consequences of failure. The project team has developed a concept test and we are seeking comment from policy units that are responsible for the standard test regime. The approach has not been accepted in Queensland yet except for a few limited trials.

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5.6 Customising the resources?

The project team started out developing resources which had a strong indigenous flavour. It was our intention to engender ownership through the use of cultural icons. While we moved away from an “aboriginal theme” we tried to retain the philosophy. We kept the option open for community groups to theme the resources through the use of logos, graphics or colours. We proposed that this could further integrate the package into their program by tailoring the resource to fit their clients perceptions.

No community group took up the opportunity to print up the resources in a manner that would dovetail the process into their existing program, but it is still possible. We did however ask that agencies not to change the central substance of the activities without consultation. That was not because of any preciousness but rather to avoid an inadvertent change to the integrity of the information. It was also made clear that we wanted to pool the best ideas and make the improved resource available to everyone.

5.7 Project Outcomes for the Clients and Agencies Involved.

The Road Safety Team in Toowoomba have conducted over 500 Learner’s Licence Tests since starting the project in early 1996. While this number includes some people who repeat the test more than once before they are able to pass the overall number of applicants who have passed is in excess of 200.

Community agencies continue to find their way to my door at the rate of about one per fortnight. To date, every agency enquiring has taken away resources to use with their clients. We have kept a database of contacts but as yet have not run any structured appraisal of what numbers of their clients are successful in passing their learners test. While the **numbers** may not be significant, it is fair to say that the **impact** of passing may be more significant for these clients than the many people who pass through the normal process without difficulty.

6. Where to from here

The Reference Group will continue to support development of the program:

- ?? While clients have a need for assistance
- ?? Until a better and equally affordable option becomes available
- ?? While opportunity exists for continual development of the resources to meet client needs.

We are also waiting with interest for feedback from the trial being run by “Community Programs and Information Branch” of Queensland Transport. The Reference Group is interested in the best solutions not holding onto the current incarnation.

The Group has for a long time realised that the current resources are very basic and that it would be easy for someone with dollars and time to build a better “mousetrap”. While we are waiting for it we have aspirations to:

- ?? Increase our understanding of what other groups are doing, so we can avoid duplication
- ?? Work collaboratively with the broadest range of agencies to achieve positive outcomes.
- ?? Increase our ability to understand the common underlying causes of self-harming behaviours/thinking/feelings.
- ?? Restructure Activity 2 to include a context matched road sign game
- ?? Build an interactive CD version of the resources
- ?? Further develop the resources and processes for group testing
- ?? Improve our ability to communicate with both agencies and the end user

Stay positive and keep an open mind.

7. What others say about the project?

The program is only as good as the success it achieves. The real story needs to be told by the people who are at the front line. Below are a few anecdotes and quotes to try and capture how people feel about the project.

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The End Users of the Resources.

Kylie came in and asked if we could help her boyfriend, Jamie, pass his learners. "He can't read very well". They borrowed the resource kit and a week later he passed his learners. The next day he had a job. Kylie said, "... kit was easy to follow and very beneficial, with an element of fun."

A young aboriginal man, with almost no literacy skills, was keen to use the resources. He received a traffic fine for unlicensed driving (not his first) which used most of the money for the holiday he and his wife had recently been on. He passed the test after participating in a group training session with other community members.

The Administration Officer at Road Safety still recalls the day when a young Sudanese man came into the office with a wall to wall smile. After using the resources with one of our reference group he had passed the test and his gratitude was boundless.

Not everyone passes. One older lady came to our sessions about seven times before she retired without gaining her learners Licence. She enjoyed coming, but the community expressed relief that she had given up her aspiration to drive.

The Agencies who Use the Resource.

Lynnette works for Lifeline and has a lot to do with people from non English speaking backgrounds. Recently she ran training sessions with women who's first language is Russian, Mandarin, Tagalog, Spanish and Thai. One of these women said to her after the session, "Now we can be independent" and not have to depend on our husbands so much.

Clive invited me to do a show and tell when he was working with Queensland Transport and was instrumental in establishing the Reference Group for the project. He recently wrote and said, "I found the resource a very practical help to a range of agencies that were attempting to address the literacy needs of their clients. My goal was to allow various agencies to make connections, canvass their various needs and attempt to address these needs- consequently I am doing the PhD - The resource and the collaborative nature of its development has limited the need to re-invent the wheel, a common occurrence in road safety education".

Mark the current project manager for the state-wide evaluation of the resources said, "In my position, I was able to utilize the resource produced by Mal McIlwraith (Southern Region) and supplemented it with materials relating to road safety and risk taking behavior. The resource provides a base to assist Community Programs in promoting road safety."

Jacky who is a Manager at a Community Centre where the project has been run for several years sums up her experience with the project in the following words. "Many community participants have really needed a licence for work commitments and without assistance they would not be employed. The fact that people are able to do their written tests for truck and bus licences in their own community and in a familiar environment supported by their peers contributes to the success of the program."

Donna working for Mission Employment on a J-PET project said, "We were stuck with around 250 young people between 15 and 19 who could all drive (but no-one had their licence), wanted to learn the road rules ...problem was most had a Year 7 education, many had only functional literacy.... but had traditionally failed tests of all descriptions. this resource allows us to address risk taking behaviors by interrelating the safety issues of being a responsible pedestrian, passenger and eventually driver. That's how this resource has helped our at risk client group become interested in becoming legally licensed drivers".

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9. Summary

The project is building momentum and that is encouraging. We are really interested in learning what other people are doing to address this issue and we are equally interested in sharing the resources that we have developed as a project team. It seems to be true that people learn in many different ways and start from different starting points. The resource that we have been working on tries to reflect this fact by being as flexible as the medium allows. One approach is never going to suit all people but none the less a single flexible approach, that is well crafted, can meet the needs of a good number of interested people. We have seen many people profit through using this resource and we are only too happy to share what we have done with other people who are interested.

10. Project Contact

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