

Keys2drive: the evolution continues

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Abstract

Keys2drive, Australia's largest-ever learner-driver education program, recently celebrated two milestones – its eighth birthday and its 500,000th participant. Keys2drive is aimed at arresting the overrepresentation of novice drivers in road trauma across Australia. Citizens aged 17-25 comprise only 13% of the Australian population, but more than 20% of the annual road toll (Senserrick, 2015). In 2009, when Keys2drive lessons began, there were 291 road crash fatalities among drivers and passengers aged 17-25, which equates to 28% of the total number of fatalities. In 2016, that number dropped to 192 (BITRE, 2016), or 23% of the total. Although not solely responsible, Keys2drive has helped shape this outcome by boosting the skills, confidence and risk management of novice drivers and their supervisors.

Background

Keys2drive was borne from a strong community desire to 'do something' about high crash rates for novice drivers. Leading up to the 2007 federal election, the Australian Automobile Association, and its constituent motoring clubs, approached the Federal Government (and Federal Opposition) and asked them to fund a program that would look at new ways to address the overrepresentation of young people in road trauma. At the time, evaluations of many other driver education and training programs from around the world had shown mixed or inconclusive results. Keys2drive sought to overcome this by incorporating the latest research and changing the way novice drivers are taught by professional driving instructors and by their supervising drivers. Keys2drive was designed to address a number of fundamentals:

- The importance of novice drivers having extensive real-world driving experience on the road
- Addressing the overconfidence and optimism bias of novice solo drivers
- Upskilling those parents who felt underprepared for supervising a beginner driver
- Harnessing and enhancing the existing driving instruction sector by providing new training
- Focusing on active learning methods, self-management skills and the higher levels of the Goals for Driver Education (GDE) Matrix
- Designing a program applicable to all Australian states and territories
- Complementing the (at the time) newly-introduced state and territory-based graduated licensing systems.

Method

The essence of Keys2drive is education for three critical parties: driving instructors, parents (or supervisors) and learner-drivers. Participants learn the reasons behind the elevated crash risk for newly-licensed drivers and strategies to mitigate them. Through Keys2drive's 'long, wide and deep' methodology, participants also learn ways to critique their own driving skills and decisions, as a qualified instructor or assessor would. For supervisors, the program aims to counteract the traditional, and usually unhelpful, method of simply telling learner-drivers what they should know and do. Keys2drive is not about driving, per se. It is about human behaviour in a driving context. It helps to make novice drivers, and their key influencers in life, more aware, more resilient, and better prepared for solo driving.

Results

To date, Keys2drive has trained more than 2,500 driving instructors and has discussed road safety with more than 560,000 people, a number higher than the population of Tasmania. Keys2drive has been evaluated five times, most recently by Transport and Road Safety (TARS) Research. That evaluation contained a retrospective analysis of questionnaire data from learner-drivers and supervisors, and showed that surveyed Keys2drive participants held a learner's licence for longer than the mandatory 6-12 months and were less likely to break road rules or crash in the first six months on their P-plates (Senserrick & Mitchell, 2013). Keys2drive has also conducted its own nationwide surveys into the outcomes of the program from a supervisor's perspective. These surveys have shown that Keys2drive's 'train the trainer' approach and mandatory parental involvement are having an impact. Parents and supervisors have become more aware of road safety issues and are better teachers and mentors, having learnt how to pass on safe habits and driving practices to learner-drivers to, hopefully, make them safer.

References

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