

Driving Instructors, Schools, Parents and Communities.

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On 1st July 2007, a large number of changes were made to young driver licensing in New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria that will have a considerable effect on those young drivers along with their parents, professional driving instructors and law enforcement agencies. Included in these changes will be radical adjustments to the driving test that is to be introduced in NSW towards the end of the year. The new test will be the first time anywhere that a driving test has been specifically designed to address the five major types of crashes amongst young drivers.

These major crash types make up 89% of all reported crashes experienced by drivers under the age of 25. The new test will place much more emphasis on hazard perception and anticipation, on crash avoidance space, decision making and visibility, rather than just the more traditional skills based testing on controls and manoeuvring.

In order that these radical changes will have some effect, there will need to be a concerted effort from all sections of the community, including parents, driving instructors, schools and law enforcement agencies such as the police and the courts. Parents will need to plan for the learner licence phase and then to support the restrictions placed on the P1 and P2 licence phases. Driving Instructors will need to place the required emphasis on teaching hazard awareness, anticipation and perception and will need to work with parents to keep programs on track and help keep the system honest.

The PDHPE Program in schools will need to be aligned with the changes and to support the concept of greater experience during the learner phase producing safer and more competent drivers. The community will need to support the concept of zero tolerance to speeding so that in the same way that the community accepted zero tolerance to alcohol and driving in the late 1980's, new drivers will have to accept this important attitudinal change.

There has been a series of workshops for driving instructors held in various locations around NSW to inform them of the changes and to assist them in planning how to implement training programs effectively and how to prepare new drivers for the new test and enlist the help of parents to keep the programs on track. There has also been some information evenings for parents and their young drivers to inform them of the changes and to help them understand what they need to do. Driver testing officers are being trained in the requirements of the new test, which will be implemented around NSW towards the end of the year.

This paper looks at the types of crashes that involve young drivers, which led to all the changes that were implemented on 1st July 2007 and how the new driving test will help to focus the training and education of new drivers into ways of avoiding these crashes. It also looks at the impact these changes will have on new drivers, their parents, driving instructors, the police and the wider community and how these sections can best play their part to help make the changes work.