

Empowering youth in schools to be safer road users; Peer-led by Undergraduates

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Acknowledgements

This paper draws upon and forms a part of the continuing program development and documentation of Fit to Drive (f2d) undertaken over the period of 2002 -2011 by Graham Spencer, Bernadette Ariens and Kerry Montero.

The author acknowledges all of the Fit to Drive (f2d) facilitators, coordinators, senior program officers, local government road safety representatives and officers and community members who form a part of the f2d "community of interest" (Spinosa 1996). The advice and support from TAC, DEECD, Victoria Police, RACV, MFB, Vic Roads and many other stakeholders from f2d communities across Victoria is recognised and is highly valued in the development of the Fit to drive program.

The presentation also references the written work of Kerry Montero in her unpublished draft thesis *An examination of young people's understandings of risk and risk-taking in relation to road safety*.

Further Acknowledgements

The program development of Fit to Drive (f2d) has included action research by the program developers and individually by Kerry Montero.

Two independent evaluations of the Fit to Drive program have been undertaken. One evaluation was made by Wyndham Council; the other was commissioned by the Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB). Both of these evaluations were made by Ian Hughes from Dynamic Outcomes.

Information in this paper about the impact of the f2d program on communities, has been drawn from over 500 debrief notes from individual workshops and the written, evaluations of 80,000 students who have experienced and recommended the program to others over a period of 8 years.

The paper uses the program term Fit to Drive or the abbreviation f2d throughout

Background to Fit to Drive (f2d)

The Fit to Drive (f2d) model is a community intervention strategy, led by tertiary undergraduates aimed at empowering young people in Senior Secondary Colleges, TAFE Colleges and AMES Centers in Victoria to be safer road users.

The purpose of this paper is to present and explain the collaborative ability and potential of the f2d "Community" (local school groups, local government) to support Victorian Government Road Safety actions. The partnership approach adopted by f2d aims to generate a measured, sustainable and potentially effective response to young people's overrepresentation in road crashes.

Methods:

1. Exploring the proposition of how and why young people embrace the Year 11 Fit to Drive (f2d) workshop. This is done through demonstrating the direct link f2d has to "best practice" traffic safety education resources and their use alongside powerful individual stories, case studies, facts and evidence.

2 Presenting the current research and the case for using small group workshops led by trained tertiary students to stimulate, challenge and potentially reframe young people's thinking.

What is f2d? A Program Description

The f2d model presents communities with the opportunity to partner with other Government and Non Government road safety stakeholders in a program for young people that focuses on personal safety, responsibility and strategies to help them become safer drivers and passengers.

Young drivers comprise a small proportion of licensed drivers yet are substantially more involved and over represented in road crashes, fatalities and injuries than other drivers. Immediately after obtaining their license young people are at their greatest risk. Young driver overrepresentation in crashes is a problem across the world and poses a huge problem for developing communities as motorisation increases. (Toroyan, T. & Peden, M. 2007)

Tackling this issue will form a major part of the "Decade of Road Safety Action".

"The high accident involvement among young novice drivers is partly an effect of lack of knowledge, insight, risk awareness and experience and partly an effect of age-related factors such as lifestyle, peer groups, socialisation process and maturity."

Swedish National Road and Transport Research Institute Report 2003

The f2d model is a local Victorian initiative originally trialed, significantly funded by, and developed in, Frankston and the Mornington Peninsula to reduce road traffic injuries amongst young people.

The f2d approach has the support of TAC, DEECD, MFB, Victoria Police, RACV, Vic Roads, Local Government, Universities and Schools. An early partner was BlueScope Steel who has continued their support of the f2d program over a period of nine years.

Building upon and enriching existing Traffic Safety Education (TSE) Curriculum and other key road safety programs, f2d offers a half day, Year 11 Workshop that is facilitated by trained tertiary students who are positioned as road safety ambassadors and where the focus is upon student engagement and the development of a learning community to discover more about safer road use.

The philosophy of the f2d program incorporates the belief that young people have the capacity to change and influence attitudes in relation to risky driving, and supports them to take ownership and responsibility for their own and their peers' safety. The program helps young people, using active learning methods that draw upon their own experiences, encouraging a respect and pride in safe road use. The road to empowerment is fostered through the small group facilitation undertaken by tertiary undergraduates.

The Specific Project Goals for the Fit to Drive (f2d) Program are:

1. To build upon and enrich the existing Traffic Safety Education (TSE) Curriculum and other key programs and to support schools and teachers in their work.
2. To engage students with TSE activities facilitated by trained university students thereby contributing to the establishment of a learning community dedicated to safe road use
3. To train and develop a group of undergraduates and to educate other professionals to be road safety ambassadors committed to helping young people survive on the roads.

The Specific, Intended learning Outcomes are:

1. Develop a greater awareness in young people of the risks and factors that contribute to road crashes in their age group. The factors include inexperience, speed, overconfidence, distractions, drugs, alcohol and fatigue.
2. Analyse and challenge attitudes to risk taking behaviour among young drivers and passengers using peer led education strategies and facilitated by trained university undergraduates. Strategies and phrases are provided and developed in the Year 11 workshop to assist young people to manage their personal behaviour and peer pressure in relation to their behaviour as drivers and passengers.

3. Reduce the effect of young driver inexperience as a prime factor in road crashes by re-enforcing the need for young drivers to improve their skills by:

- Extending their driving experience in all types of conditions in order to obtain 120 hours of practice.
- Improving access to those types of experiences that will accomplish this.

The "Basic and Guiding Principles of the Program" are presented here diagrammatically and are the first step in understanding f2d and how it establishes its own "recognizable and distinct identity and community". The Basic and Guiding Principles also provide insight into why young people are engaged and recommend the program so highly.

Basic and Guiding Principles of the f2d Program

See Figure 1.

The 10 "R's" listed below (Responsibility, Real Life Curriculum, Reciprocity and Risk Management, Respect for road laws, Research, Raising Awareness, Repetition, Resilience, Role Models and Relationships) suggest the scope, describe the fundamentals of the program, and reflect the aspirations of the people who make up the f2d community.

The trained university students, who are the road safety role models or ambassadors, facilitate the Year 11(16 -17) age group discussion with these basic principles as their guide and aim. The importance of the small group workshops, usually held in the school or local learning centre, signal the beginnings of a learning community and have primary position in the official representations of f2d to road safety stakeholders.

The small group workshop led by a university undergraduate embodies what is most recognizable and distinctive about the f2d program. It is the small group session led by a university undergraduate that lends the distinctive character and authority as a unique approach. "The other activities that are presented as part of the "whole school curriculum approach" such as Keys Please in Year 10, the Year 12 activities, and youth forums, radiate out from this central focus.

Road Safety partners such as MFB, CFA and Victoria Police, shape their own presentation, their material and delivery style, to the approach and practice of the interactive workshop, emphasising the interactive, participatory nature of the learning environment." (Montero, K. unpublished draft thesis)

RMIT University has, over the years of f2d's development, incorporated the f2d training into an elective in their Bachelor of Social Science (Youth Work) Degree. Other tertiary institutions such as VUT, Latrobe Bendigo, University of Ballarat and Deakin University are significant partners, support the program and have endorsed the training. MFB and

CFA members and Victoria Police Youth Resource Officers undergo their training working alongside the University undergraduates.

Annually, around 100 tertiary students are trained from Victorian Universities as road safety ambassadors and an annual data base of around 80 students is retained for the duration of their commitment and employment. The facilitator training is supported by the RACV.

A key feature of the f2d program in Victoria has been the ability to gain access to the VCE Curriculum in secondary schools and TAFE Colleges for Traffic Safety Education. In almost all instances this access has continued each year in schools and communities that have developed the program

The average cost for a half day workshop of approximately 150 Year 11 students held in a school and involving 8 university undergraduates, police youth resource officer, facilitator coordinator, a senior program officer presenter is around \$1500. The average cost is approximately \$11.00 per participant for half a day. This charge is met in a variety of ways by the local community including in many instances a contribution from the school.

Fit to Drive (f2d) is community based and organized in local government areas, however the program development, training and coordination is administered through the Fit to drive Foundation Incorporated a Victorian Community Road safety Alliance (VCRSA) registered body.

After nine years of operation, the half day f2d program annually involves 37 Local Government Areas in the Metropolitan and Country areas, 160 Government, Independent and Catholic schools, reaching around 20,000 young people annually. **Figure 2**

What is the f2d Community and what is meant by a whole of community approach?

The Fit to Drive program sets out to create a safer driving community for young people and to do this successfully there needs to be a whole of community approach.

The program's intention is to be inclusive of all local groups who have a stake in road safety. (For example: the local council, the local road safety Alliance membership group, the local police, secondary schools and TAFE Colleges in the area.)

The program actively invites participation by the local community and seeks to be empowering to the many groups who are involved or who are interested in road safety. (For example: local SES, local service clubs, and local health networks.)

Existing f2d Communities have established connections and networks between groups and with other communities who have shown interest and commenced to tackle the issue. These representatives along with the program coordinators meet monthly.

Documentation provided by the program coordinators and developers requires that Local Communities develop partnerships with the major stakeholders in the community such as Vic Roads/TAC/RACV/Victoria Police/MFB/CFA. The training program for the university undergraduates is undertaken in different communities, has stakeholder and university support and is consistent throughout the state. The local program must be sustainable before it commences and the involvement of as many people as possible is the necessary basis for growth and volunteer commitment.²

The f2d Model as an Example of Community Capacity Building

In essence the local approach employed through f2d is an example of community capacity building. Community members are actively involved. Community capacity is built through a concerted local effort to draw attention to young driver issues in the area or region.

The f2d community organisation therefore can potentially act as a rallying point when trauma occurs. Establishment of a f2d program may help to correct mistaken ideas about the reasons for young driver overrepresentation in crashes and convey timely safe messages to change behaviour. Road trauma impacts tragically on the quality of human life. Communities, by partnering with other government and non Government road safety agencies committed to reducing the road toll, have an opportunity therefore to achieve a greater sense of purpose and potentially effectiveness.

How and why do Young People Embrace the Year 11 Small Group Workshop that is led by Tertiary Undergraduates?

This section of the paper explores the proposition of how and why young people embrace the Year 11 f2d workshop, demonstrating the direct link of the f2d program to best practice traffic safety education resources in schools and the potential power of university undergraduate, peer led facilitation when it is accompanied by individual stories, case studies, facts and evidence.

To fully understand the impact of the year 11 f2d Workshop it is necessary to consider the contextual elements of the f2d program itself that the tertiary undergraduates work with, and the methods they use.

The Year 11 f2d Workshop is an enrichment program arising from the resource "Traffic Safety Essentials for Young Road Users"³. This curriculum resource is made available for all Schools by the Victorian Traffic Safety Education (TSE) key partner organisations including TAC, Vic roads, Victoria Police, RACV, Metlink, DEECD, and is distributed through the DEECD senior program officers.

Through this connection with other road safety programs including the VicRoads "Keys Please" young people are reminded of their prior learning. In particular, young people gain an insight into a road safety community of stakeholders (international, national, state and local) who are committed to strategies to help young people survive on the roads. This approach reinforces the evidence that there have been successful policy and strategy measures employed that have worked to reduce the toll in our community over many years.

Student Engagement in f2d and the Journey to Establishing a Safer Roads Learning Community

Looking from outside the Year 11 f2d workshop at the program, the schedule, the sessions and the structure it is possible to view the process as one of separate sections. For the young people it is series of closely linked experiences, a journey with each closing line of each activity leading on to the next. Kerry Montero in her thesis work, 4 describes this linking as "assemblage" a gathering at one point.

Powerful personal stories are woven into the fabric of the f2d program - Julie's story, The MFB Case Study, the TAC film clips and in selected instances the input of road trauma victims. A climate is created where young people are made "work ready" for the deeper work in the small group workshops.

In small facilitation groups, young people give and form opinions, hear evidence and come to conclusions. The influential personal stories often emanate directly from the community in which the school is situated and the young people reside. The stories differ in some way from community to community, however for the f2d program they are carefully chosen to ensure that they contribute to the overall aims of the program and are not there to distract from the goals of the program.

In an early workshop activity facilitated by university undergraduates, young people discover that individuals consider and treat risk differently and that there are many opinions about road safety. They find out too that there is a body of road safety evidence that may be draw upon in developing strategies to reduce risks and increase their chance of survival

Using an example from another environment the MFB/CFA study allows young people to examine a crash study of car over-loading that involves such influences as peer pressure, raises the question of who is responsible and sheds light on the choices made and the consequences that affect so many. This is the only story taken from outside Victoria and involves a real life crash study from NSW. This case study was chosen deliberately to heighten the ability of young people to view the situation with some objectivity, or distance.

In the final facilitation activity young people examine scenarios and practice assertively standing up for themselves by saying "no" or "I feel unsafe". They learn to construct and

rehearse phrases that encompass and confront their feelings, the behavior they are experiencing and the consequences that may arise in dangerous circumstances.

Where Fit to Drive communities have been established for some time Youth Forums supported and sponsored by local government have emerged that look more deeply at the road safety issues surrounding survival on the roads.

The authority of the presenters, Principals, MFB members, Police Youth Resource Officers help to give the program a stamp of moral authority as they act as the source of information and authenticity. Working as a team they are involved in setting the scene, linking the activities and acting as the source of road safety facts. These responsibilities are all aspects of their role and help to validate the individual and shared learning that is taking place for the young people in the small groups.

The training of the university undergraduate facilitators and the facilitation method employed in the student groups encourages the expression of opinions that are developed by young people in the small group sessions. The f2d small group discussion within the year 11 workshop is seeped in student engagement and sets out to foster a climate where young people can express their viewpoints openly and learn to understand that they are not alone in tackling the significant social issue of young driver death and injury. This is the beginning of a youth and adult partnership.

The small group skill method used in training university facilitators encourages them to foster discovery learning among the young people and to leave with a scripted conclusion that summarises the learning.

The concluding lines from an activity, that is based on a value analysis of a statement such as "it is fun to speed", is - "We have just had a chance to hear our opinions. Whilst we might have opinions, there are some facts about road safety that may cause you to change your opinions." In another activity that involves rating high risk activities, according to actual road crash data, the closing line from the facilitator is - "The more exposure you have to risk on the road, the more likely you are to have a crash."

One of the keys to the engagement and empowerment felt by Year 11 Secondary College and TAFE students during their half day workshop is to be found in the facilitation skills in which the undergraduates are trained. The University Undergraduates are taught such specific small group listening, counseling and communication skills as "paraphrasing" (restating and rephrasing what has been said, making it simpler and shorter, to validate listening) and "centralizing" (in this context, neutralizing for example personal stories to focus on the safe situation).

Physical movement, modeling positive behaviour and eye contact are all included in the training of the undergraduates, alongside developing strategies to deal with the challenges encountered in small group facilitation.

As has been already acknowledged the small group workshops have a primary place in the documentation and official representation of f2d and they are clearly a key reason why young people are engaged and drawn to the program. Young people are encouraged to share what they have experienced and learned with their parents (who are an important part of the partnership) and with others.

"The small group workshop is effective in eliciting young people's views and responses to problems and situations, getting them to explore their attitudes and assumptions, presenting new information and inviting them to respond to this, presenting and exploring alternative/new ways of seeing and interpreting: responsibilities; capacity to effect change; exercise control over their circumstances; impact on their environment and shift perspectives." (Montero, K. unpublished draft thesis)

Presenting Research for using small groups peer led by university undergraduates in Road Safety Education to stimulate, challenge and potentially reframe young people's thinking

Literature about the effectiveness of peer led research is specialized. As to this time the developers of the f2d program have not been able to find significant supporting evidence from similar road safety programs that follow the integrated f2d community model with its, peer led by university undergraduate approach.

There is evidence of youth forums and public hospital and health programs that have similarities. However, none of these programs involve the systematic approach to the establishment of the f2d community of interest, the whole of community approach, nor demonstrate and explore the advantages of choosing "close in age" trained university graduates as road safety ambassadors.

There appears therefore, from the various attempts by the originators of the program to locate research, a lack of literature with this specific emphasis.

There is, however, documented research on preventative intervention programs in the health promotion areas of, for example the prevention of sexually transmitted disease drug and alcohol abuse, mental health, violence and crime and tobacco use. A number of these studies could provide insights into adolescent interventions that may prove valuable and have implications for the f2d program. Some of these possibilities are being pursued

There is clearly a need for further research to explore the role university graduates, as road safety ambassadors, play in supporting teachers and promoting the engagement and involvement of students in this critical social issue. In particular to provide substantial evidence as to what the f2d program does, as part of a whole of community effort, to achieve a direct behavioral impact or reduce risk factors.

Information obtained from "In the Drivers Seat II; Beyond the Early Driving Years" a report from the Australian Temperance Project (Vassalo, Smart, Harrison, Cockfield and

Harris 200) would seem to support the choice of young university graduates as the preferred role model or ambassador for young people of 16 or 17.

In that study of the driving influences and practices of young Victorian drivers it was reported that University educated young people were "less likely to be have had their license cancelled or suspended, were less likely to have friends who were drink-drivers, more often used forward planning when making pains to avoid drink driving and were less likely to drink drive after making these plans". See References

This observation would appear to suggest support for the practice of choosing university undergraduates as peer leaders and role models in the f2d Program. The second and third year students are drawn from a variety of courses (youth work, social work, and psychology); however they are primarily from education.

There is an abundance of material to indicate that facilitated group discussion is a powerful tool in any education program both for engaging, shaping opinions and sharing information and resources. Collaborative approaches in education have long been known to assist young people to become more confident in developing strategies to tackle the issues they confront.

Helping young people understand who they are and to develop their own opinions and style is more likely to lead to positive behaviour and to this degree the facilitation methods adopted in Fit to Drive encourage a climate where peer influences can be evaluated and negative peer pressure rejected.

Any future evaluation or study would need to embrace and perhaps separate changes that the f2d model and approach can achieve to increased understanding about road safety issues, as distinct from changes that are achieved in the area of attitudes and beliefs and dispositions. There is still material to be gathered in understanding what the attitudes to speed among young people are, for example (Are they different from other age groups?) and the prevalence of risky driving. The Fit to Drive (f2d) Foundation has embarked on a project to map young people's attitudes to speed and evaluate change in opinion towards speed among young people who have undertaken the Fit to Drive (f2d) program. . Allied to that study would be a subsequent program to trial youth and community action projects to "Reduce Speed" working with Victoria Police, MFB and other Road Rescue organisations.

Overall, in terms of the specific project goals and the intended learning outcomes surrounding the f2d model, the task ahead is to, on a larger scale, independently evaluate the program. The challenge is to endeavor to find other evaluations of interventions that successfully show evidence of changing behaviors or contributing to the reduction of risk for young people as road users.

Conclusion:

Considering the growth and the development of the Fit to Drive (f2d) 2d Model, the levels of local and statewide government and non government stakeholder support and the significant numbers of schools and young people that have been involved, the Fit to Drive (f2d) program has become an acknowledged education initiative aimed at safer road user behaviour by young people.

The principles, the undergraduate peer led approach and the initial findings indicate that Fit to Drive (f2d) is a credible and potentially effective local community road safety response and perhaps a community capacity building model that may be of value within the context of the "Decade of Road Safety Action".

Figure 1. Basic and Guiding Principles of the Fit to Drive f2d program

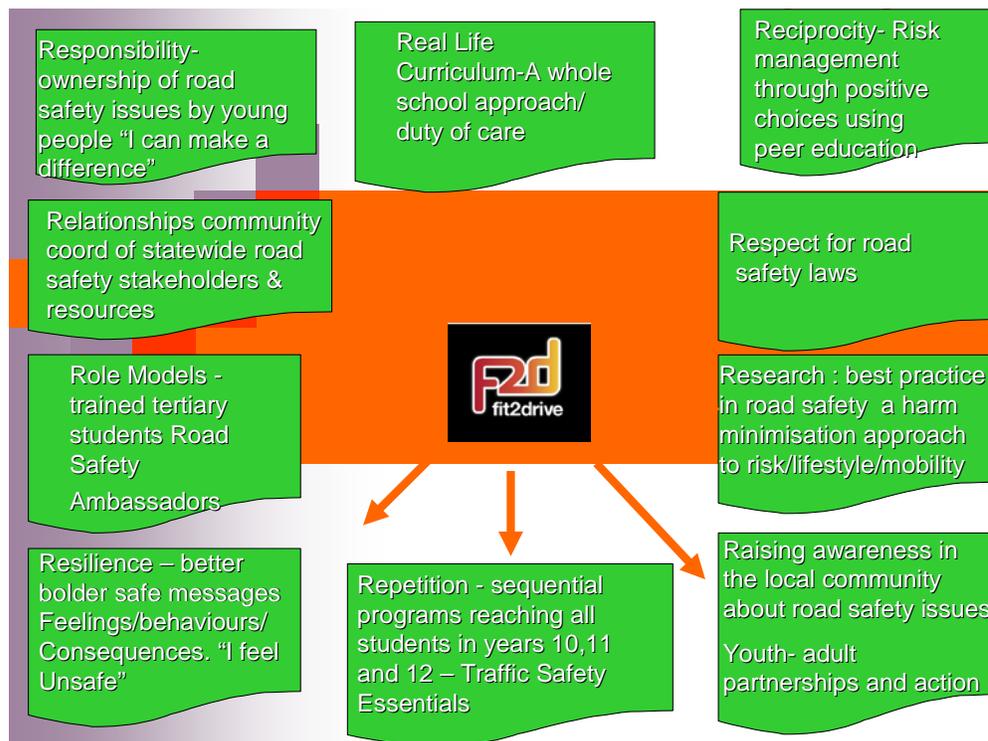


Figure 2

The Local Government Areas involved in Victoria are (33)

| | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| Ballarat | Banyule | Bendigo |
| Boroondara | Brimbank | Cardinia |
| Casey | Colac | Dandenong |
| Darebin | Frankston | Geelong |
| Hobson's Bay | Hume | Kingston |
| Macedon Ranges | Manningham | Maribyrnong |
| Melton | Moonee Valley | Moreland |
| Mornington | Nillumbik | Stonington |
| Whitehorse | Whitehorse | Whittlesea |
| Wyndham Port Phillip | City of Yarra Melbourne | Glen Eira Maroondah |

Under discussion and development Warrnambool, Corangamite, Moyne, Swan Hill, Wangaratta and Mildura

Year 11 Secondary School* Workshops

| Year | Sessions held | Students participants (approx) |
|------|---------------|--------------------------------|
| 2007 | 85 | 10,000 |
| 2008 | 130 | 15,000 |
| 2009 | 150 | 20,000 |
| 2010 | 165 | 22,000 |

*Government, Catholic and Independent, TAFE Colleges, AMES

Footnotes

1. Over eight years of student evaluation forms completed in each workshop, accompanied by the documented debrief notes of every workshop held; indicate that 97% of students would recommend f2d to others.
2. Documentation about f2d for Communities provided by Graham Spencer, Bernadette Ariens and K Montero to assist in their establishment (2005)
3. *Traffic Safety Essentials for young Road Users* developed by Dynamic Outcomes for the TAC 2007
4. Kerry Montero RMIT University Thesis documentation.

“The idea of assemblage employed in this sense is an apt description of the Fit to Drive workshop. As a morning’s program it can be functionally written up as a sequence of activities, presentations and small group sessions, with designated time allocations, directions as to where each activity should occur, and who should be conducting said activity. However, this does not capture the way the whole workshop, in becoming an assemblage of fragments of story, facts, voices, images, movement and personal interactions, becomes in this process an entity that, in absorbing these elements, metamorphoses into something whose function and being gains its purpose and identity.”

Montero *Unpublished draft thesis*

Selected References, Documentation, Research and Evaluation for the Fit to Drive (f2d) program

As a result of evaluation evidence and research findings both the program and the training of f2d university undergraduates has been developed and modified over the past 8 years.

The documentation has continually been refined. A literature review using some of the following more recent papers has continued. This includes:

Engström, I., Gregersen, N. P., Hernetkoski, K., Keskinen, E., & Nyberg, A. Swedish National Road and Transport Research Institute *Young Novice drivers, driver education and training Literature review*

Global Road Safety Partnership 2001. *Road safety education in schools: saving young lives and limbs*

<http://www.grsproadsafety.org/themes/default/pdfs/Road%20safety%20education%20in%20schools.pdf>. Accessed 30 April 2008

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Peden, M., Scurfield, R., Sleet, D., Mohan D, Hyder, A., Jarawan E.,. 2004 *The world report on road traffic injury prevention*. Geneva, World Health Organization.

Roads Corporation 2002, *Saferoads. A local Road Safety Initiative. Enhancing the safety of young drivers*. Roads Corporation, Melbourne

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| [Senserrick and N Haworth \(2007\)](#) *Young driver research where are we now?*

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Vassallo, S., Smart, D., Sanson, A., Harrison, W., Harris, A., Cockfield, S. and McIntyre, A. 2007 *In the Drivers Seat II; Beyond the Early Driving Years*. A report from the Australian Temperance Project The Second report from the collaborative partnership between the Australian Institute of Family Studies, TAC and RACV

Vassallo, S., Smart, D., Sanson, A., Harrison, W., Harris, A., Cockfield, S. and McIntyre, A. 2007, Risky driving among young Australian drivers: Trends, precursors and correlates. *Accident Analysis and Prevention* 39: 444-458.

Watson, L. M. & Newstead, S. V. 2009 *Vehicle safety and young drivers, Profile of young driver vehicles*.

Additional sources

The Year f2d Year 11 Workshop outline and program was originally designed by Kerry Montero, Graham Spencer and Bernadette Ariens using some of the material from specific youth programs developed for Vic Roads such as *Reducing the Toll* and *Survival on the Roads*. These programs were developed by Kerry Montero, Bernadette Ariens (Rowland) and David Maunders at RMIT.

Targeted evaluations conducted by the MFB (car overloading) and Wyndham Council (behavioral change) are positive.