

PrepL: Redesigning Queensland's learning and assessment for learner drivers

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Abstract

A new, online learning and assessment program, *PrepL*, has been developed to replace the existing learning and assessment requirements for persons commencing Queensland's Graduated Licensing System. In this program, road rules and safety content is delivered through modules in an interactive learning experience which prioritises customer learning and road safety benefits. *PrepL* is anticipated to deliver enhanced learning outcomes and process efficiencies for Queensland's new drivers.

Background

The education of new drivers with safe behaviours and attitudes for driving is a critical factor in road safety. Typically in Queensland, formal driving and road safety education of new drivers begins when commencing the process of applying for a learner driver licence. This process requires pre-learners to study a written guide to the road rules and pass a theoretical test. However, customer research undertaken by Queensland's Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) revealed opportunities to improve the current learner driver licensing learning and assessment process.

Customers reported high levels of dissatisfaction with the traditional approach to learner licence testing which was perceived as outdated. Under this system, learning tended to focus only on what was needed to pass the test, rather than comprehensive learning for safe driving. The test also neglected the development of higher-level cognition skills, such as situation assessment and response planning, which are crucial to safe driving (Fisher & Dorn, 2017; Pollatsek, Vlaskveld, Kappé, Pradhan, & Fisher, 2011). Lengthy processes and waiting times for applicants also increased the burden. Advances in educational theory and technology since the development of Queensland's learning and assessment model around 40 years ago also offered the opportunity to address these issues by providing an online, interactive learning experience with enhanced outcomes for pre-learner drivers.

Rethinking Queensland's learner driver learning and testing approach

Accordingly, TMR developed an online training and assessment program which supports broader learning for road safety benefits. The new program, *PrepL*, delivers road rules and safety content through a modularised approach, structured around logical topics and groupings. Introductory modules which shape good driving behaviours and attitudes provide context for the entire learning experience. More technical information, such as the road rules and why they exist, is gradually introduced, all with an overarching road safety framework. This delivers a more comprehensive learning experience than previously available, in which learners may proceed at their own pace, ensuring one concept is grasped before proceeding to the next one.

PrepL aligns with the current approach in that it requires a pre-learner driver to obtain fundamental knowledge prior to being allowed on the road. However, it is expected that the interactive and discovery-based learning environment will result in a deeper understanding of the road rules and safe driving requirements than previously achieved. Process efficiencies are also anticipated through greater convenience and accessibility with online delivery.

Conclusions

PrepL is an online learning and assessment program replacing the current testing requirements for pre-learner drivers. This represents a major update of Queensland's learner licence assessment process, and an opportunity to more effectively engage with Queensland's new driver population. With young novice drivers at increased risk on the road, providing enhanced learning and assessment methods has the potential to contribute to reductions in road fatalities and injuries among this group. Preliminary results from school-based pilots are positive. Ongoing evaluation and monitoring will determine any benefits for driver knowledge, safe attitudes and behaviours. It is expected that PrepL will be introduced into Queensland's licensing system in 2018.

References

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