

Adolescent Risk Research Unit

Rise, and shine.

Obstacles to engaging in young driver licensing: Perspectives of parents

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Why do this research?

Parents play an important role in the licensing of a young driver. Mum and Dad are models before they get a licence, often Mum and Dad pay for the test and the licence and provide most of the teaching of the young driver when they are out on the road, and they help the young person access their own car such as handing down the family car. We want parents to be as productive and as effective as possible. One of the ways to do that is to figure out what is in the way of parents being productive and effective.

What did we do?

We interviewed 23 parents of young drivers about their experience as a parent of a learner driver, as a parent of a P-plater, and in some cases as a parent of unrestricted drivers who have progressed all the way through the licensing system. We wanted them to share their knowledge.

What did we find?

Perhaps unsurprisingly, parents noted that their personalities clashed with their children sometimes when they were teaching them to drive. Anxiety about not having control of the vehicle was also commonly talked about, and parents had lots of feedback regarding how road rule testing should be improved. Parents should be supported throughout the graduated driver licensing process; Currently they don't feel they are supported. In addition, parents need help when working with driving instructors to ensure their learner gets the best training possible.

What does it mean?

We need to rethink how we support parents during this critical period of their child's development. Parents are not professional driving instructors and yet are expected in the Queensland context to help their learner accrue 100 hours of on-road driver training. Parents need more support in learning what, when, and how to teach their young driver. They also need tips on how to stay calm with their child behind the wheel, and what to do if their child becomes stressed while driving. Parents also need to be encouraged to stay involved in their P-plater's driving. While P-plates typically mean parents are no longer involved, this is the most risky time for their young driver.