Novice drivers’ experiences of parental encouragement with road rules in Queensland: Scope for a third party policing approach?

David Belsham¹, Alexia Lennon¹, Lyndel Bates², Sarah Matthews¹

¹ Queensland University of Technology, Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety-Queensland, Institute for Health and Biomedical Innovation, Brisbane, Australia
² School of Criminology and Criminal Justice and Griffith Criminology Institute, Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia

Key Findings
- Young drivers recognise that parents are concerned about their safety and are supportive;
- Young drivers believe that police enforcement is important for ensuring formal rules are obeyed;
- Theoretical frameworks such as third party policing may be useful in this area;
- Third party policing involves partnering with organisations or people and the availability of a legal lever to increase compliance.

Abstract
This study explored whether a third party policing approach is appropriate for increasing young driver compliance with graduated driver licensing restrictions. Focus groups (n = 3) and semi-structured interviews (n = 24) were conducted with young drivers from Brisbane, Queensland, Australia. Participants (n = 39 in total) were aged 17 to 19 years and held a Provisional 1 or 2 licence. Many young drivers appreciated the involvement of their parents in their novice driving period and reported that parents provided practical support and planning strategies. There is potential for the use of a third party policing intervention to improve compliance amongst young drivers.

Keywords
Third Party Policing, Graduated Driver Licensing, intermediate licence, teen drivers, young drivers, provisional licence

Introduction
The commencement of solo driving is characterised by an increase in crashes, possibly related to risky driving behaviours, particularly within the first six months of licensure (Elvik, 2010; Mayhew, Simpson, & Pak, 2003; Scully, Newsstead, & Keall, 2014). Norwegian data indicates that the youngest car drivers crash at 5 to 10 times the rate of the safest age group (Elvik, 2010). The known risk factors for this group include age and inexperience (Curry, Pfeiffer, Durbin, & Elliott, 2015) along with high-risk driving conditions such as night time driving, peer passengers, alcohol impairment, and speeding (Bates, Davey, Watson, King, & Armstrong, 2014; Beck, Hartos, & Simons-Morton, 2002; Greydanus, 2018; Shope, 2006).

One of the most effective countermeasures developed to reduce crash rates for this high risk group is Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) (Bates, et. al 2014b; Shope, 2007). Shope (2007) reviewed 27 studies of GDL and identified that there were crash reductions of 20 – 40 per cent depending on the exact elements within GDL and the evaluation methodology. An evaluation of the Queensland GDL system, introduced in mid-2007, identified a 31% reduction in fatal crashes involving novice drivers (Scully et al., 2014). GDL systems require novice drivers to progress through learner and provisional (also known as intermediate) licences before obtaining an open licence (Bates, Filtness, & Watson, 2018). However, it appears that as novice drivers progress through the GDL system, provisional or intermediate licence holders’ compliance with road rules decreases as demonstrated in a number of studies that use Queensland samples (Allen, Murphy, & Bates, 2017; Bates, Darvell, & Watson, 2017; Scott-Parker, Watson, King, & Hyde, 2012). This decrease in compliance is consistent with patterns identified in California. Researchers found that, within the first three years of unsupervised driving, 55 per cent of new teen drivers had received a traffic infringement (Chapman, Masten, & Browning, 2014). Canadian research identified that intentions to violate road rules by drivers on a restricted (the Canadian version of a provisional licence) was not associated with the driver’s experience or driving frequency (Poirier, Blais, & Faubert, 2018). It appears that young driver perceptions of police enforcement affects their self-reported compliance with the road rules. Those provisional drivers who perceived that police officers frequently enforce traffic rules were less likely to report violating fixed rules such as drink driving. However, perceptions of police enforcement did not affect young driver violations of transient offences such as speeding (Bates, Scott-Parker, Darvell, & Watson, 2017). Perceptions of legitimacy may also be important. For instance, younger people perceive that
it is not legitimate for the police to charge someone if they crash as a result of sleepiness (Watling, 2018).

**Enforcement**

While traffic enforcement based on deterrence theory by police is one of the most common methods used to alter driver behavior (Bates, 2014; Bates, Soole, & Watson, 2012; Tudor-Owen, in press), research studies which utilised a cross-sectional design indicate that this type of formal enforcement does not appear to be as effective with young new drivers (Allen, et al, 2017; Bates, et al., 2017). One Australian study used a deterrence theory framework to consider the effect of deterrence variables on self-reported compliance with road rules. This study, which used a convenience sample of university students, found an ‘emboldening’ effect where drivers exposed to higher levels of police enforcement were more likely to report lower levels of compliance (Bates, et al., 2017). The emboldening effect, first defined by Piquero and Pogarsky (2002), suggests that individuals who are the most committed to offending are also the most likely to be punished and thus punishment is an effective method for identifying these offenders. An alternative explanation, at least for some individuals, is that traffic offending is representative of a pattern of wider offending behaviour (Nunn, online first, 2018).

Given that formal deterrent does not appear as effective for young novice drivers in encouraging compliance with road rules, there is a need to consider alternative theoretical perspectives (Allen, et al, 2017; Bates, et al., 2017). One method that has been used to prevent or control crime is third party policing (Mazerolle & Ransley, 2005). Third party policing involves police agencies developing either voluntary or involuntarily partnerships with non-offending individuals or organisations in order to reduce crime (Buerger & Mazerolle, 1998; Ransley & Mazerolle, 2009). Although they are not used in many partnerships (Mazerolle, 2014), a key element of third party policing is the presence of a legal lever that can be used to coerce the partner if necessary. One example of a third party policing partnership is a partnership between police and pharmacies in order to limit the production of methamphetamine. In this example, the law requires pharmacists to keep records of their sales of pseudoephedrine and report these to the police (Webster, Mazerolle, Ransley, & Mazerolle, 2017). Third party policing partnerships have been used in range of contexts including controlling drug, alcohol and disorder crimes in entertainment areas (Manning, Mazerolle, Mazerolle, & Collingwood, 2016), reducing thefts at construction sites (Clarke & Goldstein, 2002), truancy (Bennett, Mazerolle, Antrobus, Eggins, & Piquero, 2017; Mazerolle, Bennett, Antrobus, & Eggins, 2017) and gang violence (Grogger, 2002). However, this approach has not been considered in a road policing context.

**Parental involvement**

Parental involvement during the provisional phase has the potential to encourage compliance with GDL restrictions and the road rules more broadly. This parental involvement is frequently implied within GDL frameworks (Simons-Morton, 2007; Williams, Leaf, Simons-Morton, & Hartos, 2006), though not necessarily always formally supported in the form of practical assistance. Parents generally appear to be aware of the risks faced by novice drivers and want to be involved in the licensing process so that they can reduce their teen’s risk (Williams et al., 2006). In an investigation of parental influence on adolescent compliance with GDL restrictions, Brookland, Begg, Langley, and Ameratunga (2014) found that many parents were knowledgeable and supportive of GDL conditions. However, their results also suggest that limited parental knowledge is associated with greater likelihood of adolescent breaches of the restrictions.

Parent management during the early stages of independent driving does have the potential to improve the safety of novice drivers (Simons-Morton & Ouimet, 2006) and the apparent low level of enforcement by police officers may be one reason why programs such as Checkpoints are needed. The Checkpoints program encourages parents and their children to establish a parent-teen driving agreement in order to reduce exposure to high risk driving situations. When choosing to participate, parents receive educational materials such as a video, newsletter and a parent-teen driving agreement. Research indicates that the program encourages parents to set stricter limitations and there also appears to be a reduction in teen driving offences, but no differences in their subsequent crash rates (Simons-Morton, Hartos, Leaf, & Preusser, 2006). This program has also been delivered by driver educators, though this mode of delivery presents barriers to parental participation. Despite this, some safety benefits still appear to result including a greater number of teenage drivers having restrictions placed on them by their parents and a reduction in high-risk driving (Zakrjesk et al., 2013). Additionally, research involving 579 parent and 16 year old adolescent dyads identified that those parents who had been given a video and driving agreement to take home from a licensing authority when their child obtained a provisional licence, were more likely to have parental limits on passengers, driving on high-speed roads and night driving than those who did not receive any materials (Simons-Morton, Hartos, & Beck, 2004). These types of programs encourage parental involvement with provisional drivers including increasing compliance. However, a third party policing framework is stronger as it involves a partnership between police and parents with the support of a legal lever that can be, but is not necessarily, used by police to force parental involvement.

Some aspects of the GDL system, within the learner licence phase particularly, are effectively third party policing measures. For instance, in Queensland, learners must record 100 hours of supervised driving practice within a log book before they are able to obtain a provisional licence (Scott-Parker, Bates, Watson, King, & Hyde, 2011). Given that parents are the main supervisors of learner drivers (Bates, Watson, & King, 2014; O’Brien, Foss, Goodwin, & Masten, 2013), this is effectively a legal lever that enables parents to enforce this requirement. However, the legal levers within the provisional phase of the GDL process are less clear.
Previous research has suggested that provisional drivers are more concerned about parental enforcement of their driving than with police enforcement (Allen, et al, 2017; Bates, et al., 2017). This suggests that there is scope for police to partner with parents in order to enhance enforcement efforts. Parental limits becoming stricter when a GDL system is in use is indicative that the GDL laws act as a legal lever, a key component of third party policing.

While previous research has considered parental involvement in the provisional licensing phase, this has traditionally occurred in jurisdictions that licence earlier than in Queensland, and therefore where parents may have greater contact with their children (e.g. Brookland & Begg, 2011; Peek-Asa et al., 2014). It is thus important to consider this issue in a later licensing jurisdiction where parents may have less leverage over their children because they are more likely to be over the age of 18 (and legally adults).

**Queensland context**

In Queensland, Australia, the GDL system allows individuals aged 16 years and over to obtain a learner licence (L) which they must hold for a minimum of one year. During this time they must obtain 100 hours of supervised driving before passing a practical driving test to obtain a ‘Provisional 1’ (P1) licence. After one year of driving and successful completion of an online hazard perception test, P1 drivers can progress to a Provisional 2 (P2) licence which is held for a minimum of 2 years (depending on the age of the driver), before obtaining an open licence (Senserrick, 2009). Restrictions are placed on new drivers, and these are progressively relaxed at the different stages of licensing, allowing a graded exposure to riskier driving circumstances as novices gain driving experience (Bates, et al., 2014b).

In the Queensland GDL system, restrictions on P1 drivers include having a zero blood alcohol limit, displaying a red P plate on the vehicle to indicate licence status and being unable to use a mobile phone (including on blue tooth or hands free mode), drive a high-powered vehicle or drive with more than 1 passenger who is younger than 21 years old. The restrictions for P2 drivers include adhering to a zero blood alcohol limit, displaying a green P plate to indicate licence status and being unable to drive a high-powered vehicle. Table 1 outlines the restrictions in Queensland.

The degree to which police enforce the GDL laws appears low across a range of jurisdictions (Bates, Rodwell, & Matthews, 2019). This means that it becomes even more important for parents to monitor their children’s behaviour and enforce GDL requirements and other road laws. For this reason, any support that provides parents with a stronger ability to perform this role need investigation. The current study explores the feasibility of a third party policing approach to increase young driver compliance with road laws. It does this by examining the young driver experience in order to understand the mechanisms of parental influence.

**Table 1. Queensland Provisional Licensing Restrictions (Adapted from: Queensland Government [https://www.qld.gov.au/transport/licensing/driver-licensing/applying/provisional/index.html])**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provisional Licence One (P1)</th>
<th>Provisional Licence Two (P2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Drivers must</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Display red P plates</td>
<td>Display green P plates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only drive vehicles allowed on your licence class</td>
<td>Only drive vehicles allowed on your licence class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have your licence with you and show it to a police officer when asked</td>
<td>Have your licence with you and show it to a police officer when asked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comply with any conditions on your licence (i.e. wear corrective lenses)</td>
<td>Comply with any conditions on your licence (i.e. wear corrective lenses)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obey the Zero Alcohol limit</td>
<td>Obey the Zero Alcohol limit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Drivers must not</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use a mobile phone (even using hands-free or Bluetooth accessories) unless you are legally and safely parked. Passengers cannot use the loudspeaker function on their mobile phones</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drive a high-powered (performance) vehicle</td>
<td>Drive a high-powered (performance) vehicle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drive with more than 1 passenger under 21 who is not an immediate family member (unrelated by blood, marriage, or a guardian relationship) between 11pm and 5am</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drive under the influence of illegal or prescription drugs</td>
<td>Drive under the influence of illegal or prescription drugs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accumulate 4 or more demerit points in any 1 year period</td>
<td>Accumulate 4 or more demerit points in any 1 year period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervise a learner driver</td>
<td>Supervise a learner driver</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Method

This study utilised both focus groups and in-depth interviews. Prior research has indicated the importance of peer influences on novice drivers (e.g. Buckley & Foss, 2012; Curry, Mirman, Kallan, Winston, & Durbin, 2012; Horvath, Lewis, & Watson, 2012). Therefore, focus groups were used in order to benefit from the interactions between novice drivers who were of a similar age and assess group feelings and reactions. However, brief individual telephone interviews were also used in order to minimise the impact of peer conformity on socially desirable responding (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015).

Sample

As the target group was young novice drivers, the undergraduate psychology participant pool at a large metropolitan university in Brisbane, Queensland, Australia was used to recruit participants. Participants were offered course credit in exchange for participation. Within this pool, provisional licence holders were invited to participate either in focus groups (n = 15 participants in 3 groups; 9 females, 6 males) or individual telephone interviews (n = 24; 19 female, 5 male) to both explore their experiences in complying with the restrictions required as part of the driver licensing system in Queensland and their perceptions of how their parents approached the issue of encouraging compliance. This sample size is comparable or larger than those used in other qualitative Australian road safety studies (e.g. Gauld, Lewis, & White, 2014; Glendon, 2013). Participation was confidential and any identifying details were destroyed immediately following attendance at the group or completion of the interview. Two-thirds of the focus group participants were driving on a P2 licence (n = 10) while the remainder were on a P1 licence (n = 5). Participants ages ranged between 17 and 19 years old and groups contained a mix of individuals who were residing at the parental home and those who were living elsewhere. The provisionally licensed drivers who completed semi-structured interviews were aged aged 17 to 22. Of these, half were driving on a P1 licence and half were driving on a P2 licence.

Data collection

Focus groups (one hour duration) and telephone interviews (10-15 minutes) were semi-structured and facilitated by experienced qualitative researchers. Conversations in two of the focus groups were recorded and transcribed by a professional stenographer (present in the room at the time). Detailed notes were taken by a research assistant who was present during the third focus group. Responses to the focus group questions then guided the development of the interview schedules for the individual semi-structured telephone interviews. Interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed by a professional stenographer to allow a thematic analysis of the transcript.

Questions in the interview schedule covered the same content areas for both the focus groups and the interviews. These focused on novice drivers’ knowledge of the restrictions appropriate to both provisional licence phases, their beliefs about their parents’ level of knowledge of the restrictions, ways in which their parents had encouraged or supported them in complying with these (or not), and their views of the ease of compliance with restrictions, and whether they thought their parents were aware of any breaches or infringements of the GDL restrictions or the road rules generally (e.g. speeding tickets). Young people were also asked what they thought their parents’ views were about breaches or infringements, and how they thought parents would (or already had) responded to these. There were no major differences in the responses between the focus groups and the interviews. For this reason, the data was combined.

Results

Awareness of restrictions

When asked to identify the restrictions on their provisional licences, participants in both the focus groups and the interviews demonstrated good understanding of some GDL restrictions and the details of the rules, and appeared to understand that the purpose of these is to promote safety. Only one provisional driver admitted to not knowing the rules well.

The first restriction mentioned by most interview participants, and in all three focus groups, was the zero blood alcohol concentration (BAC) requirement. The next most common recalled was the peer passenger restriction, identified in all three focus groups and most interviews. Fewer participants identified that they must not use a mobile phone, and although this restriction tended to be mentioned in the focus groups, it was clear that not all focus group members were aware of this licence restriction beforehand. Restrictions related to demerit points, displaying plates, engine size and the requirement to carry their licence appeared to be the least well known. For some young drivers, this appeared to be due to some of those restrictions (e.g. displaying plates) being seen as routine behavior, and therefore not something they thought to identify as a requirement:

“Displaying plates and carrying your licence... comes naturally.” (22, Female, Provisional 2 (P2)).

Provisional drivers gave many reasons as to what they thought the purpose of GDL restrictions were. Most acknowledged that they included rations such as: because they were new to driving, because they were inexperienced, and that the restrictions enabled them to become more competent and experienced drivers while protecting them from various factors such as ‘stupidity’, peer influences, and developmental factors.

“[the restrictions are] to keep us safe and the people around us.” (17, Male, Provisional 1 (P1))

“Young people do stupid things so restrictions help with that and protect you when you’re learning.” (19, Female, P2)

“...when you get your P plates, you can drive alone and you feel like you can do everything but in reality you don’t have
that much more experience than when you were on your Ls; you just think you do because you have graduated a level. They put the restrictions on to make sure we realise we can’t do everything straightaway and we need to ease into it and that’s why you have got your two P’s.” (17, Female, P1)

Compliance

Participants reported that they found the zero blood alcohol restriction the easiest restriction to comply with, though it represented a challenge to manage at times. All of the focus groups and some of the interviews contained references to parents giving strong admonitions about avoiding driving after drinking:

“If I go to a party, [my parents say] ‘Just wait, even if you are going to be late or something, just call me. Please don’t drive if you have had any alcoholic drink.’ They were really restrictive on drink driving. Once I turned 18, it was like, ‘If you are going to drink at a party, please, we will pick you up or catch a cab.’” (18, Female, P2)

For some, compliance was accomplished by setting an absolute rule and simply sticking to it:

“Just don’t drink and drive so that’s easy.” (18, Female, P1)

Others appeared to have less absolute rules in relation to alcohol consumption, but gave accounts of how they dealt with instances where they thought there was a risk of being over the zero blood alcohol limit, as here:

“I was not sure how long it took for the standard drink to get out of your system. I was, like, looking it up online. I called my mum on the day we were coming home: ‘Am I okay to drive?’ [She said] ‘I wouldn’t risk it’. [So] I had someone else drive. It had been 8 hours or so; I was a bit unsure. I didn’t want to take that risk.” (19, Female, P2)

Young drivers identified that the passenger restrictions imposed during the first phase of their provisional licence was the most difficult condition for them to comply with. This was largely due to the demands of social situations. For example, drivers talked about their obligations to be the person who did not drink at parties and social gatherings so that they could drive everyone else home. However, this was often at odds with the realities of not being permitted to have sober driver for a lot of people and I usually break that rule quite a bit. I believe if people are going to drive drunk or break the rule, [breaking the passenger rule is] the lesser of two evils.” (17, Male, P1)

Parental role in encouraging compliance

All the young drivers interviewed reported that their parents had spoken to them about not speeding with some parents sharing their experiences of losing their licences as a result of their own infringements. Provisional drivers reported that their parents had also discussed drink driving with them, and had established clear rules around this, as well as offering practical support in the form of lifts and advice (such as being aware of the length of time alcohol remains in the system, and not driving the morning after drinking large amounts of alcohol, as illustrated above). Young people recognised that such actions were motivated by parental concern for their safety, and many reported that at times they had accepted offers of support.

“They would always pick me up if I needed it, no matter what the time.” (18, Female, P2)

“If I go out and drink, my dad says he will pick me up. [He says] ‘Leave the car’ he will pick me up.” (18, Male, P1)

In some cases parents provided the young driver with access to a vehicle for driving. Nearly all focus group participants reported parental rules regarding the use of the car, including rules relating to driving in certain conditions.

“They’d just give me a curfew of around 10pm during the week and home in time for the passenger restrictions on the weekends.” (18, Female, P1)

Parental rules included consequences for non-compliance by the young driver that were directed at encouraging compliance and accepting individual responsibility for doing so. Provisional drivers in Queensland lose their driver’s licence once they accumulate four demerit points for committing driving offences such as speeding. Parents were able to remind their children of this.

“The other thing they also made me realise is that I only have four points. They decided, if I was going to get caught speeding, I would first have to pay for the ticket and then they would take away my car.” (17, Female, P1)

Participants also identified a combination of helpful measures undertaken by their parents in attempting to encourage compliance. Most suggested that their parents had done helpful things, such as being available and showing parental concern through checking up on their activities. Placing responsibility on the young driver by parents was reported as helpful by some participants, as were generic reminders, such as ‘stay safe’.

The role of police

Participants acknowledged that police had a role in encouraging novice driver compliance with GDL restrictions. Focus group participants suggested that police enforcement of rules was necessary if parents had not provided adequate guidance and support.

“I think it is good to have it [enforcement] from the police…A lot of people who don’t have a really supportive
relationship with their parents, they haven’t been taught these kinds of rules. They haven’t had the enforcement from family: they are going to need some enforcement options.” (Female, 18, P2)

Inherent in this comment is the recognition that some parental approaches could lack the control ("these kinds of rules") required to effectively manage a young novice driver. Police, and the formal GDL restrictions that they enforce, were recognised as not only necessary in order to compensate for ineffective parenting, but also to deal with purposeful law breaking.

In a focus group, a participant gave an example where he thought the police should have approached his infringement differently, issuing a warning to him for not carrying his licence rather than the formal sanction that had been imposed:

“They [police] should approach it differently. I can understand if the person was hectic, speeding or being crazy or reckless or something [that police enforcement is necessary]. For someone like me, I really try my best to abide by every law possible.” (Male, P1)

This participant’s comment acknowledges the role of police as enforcers of formal rules and prevention of deliberate law breaking. However, at the same time, the suggestion that a caution could have been issued instead of a sanction suggests a desire for police to operate with a more parental/developmental approach, taking into account his normal intentions to comply, and rewarding the spirit of his approach to the restrictions rather than adopting a punitive and rule-bound stance. He does not appear to consider that avoiding the punishment on this occasion means that he will likely continue to engage in the behaviour in the future.

Parents as policing partners

Participants acknowledged a necessity for both parental and police approaches to reflect the different roles/functions of each group: parents as encouraging safe driving practices and the development of self-regulation of compliance behaviour; police as enforcing formal rules. There was also recognition that, while for many young drivers, the expectations from their parents was enough to encourage compliance, there were others who might need more than this:

Police are important because for people like us who make genuine mistakes, it might be okay [enough] coming from our parents. People who don’t abide by the laws, you need the higher up officials to enforce them. Teenagers aren’t always going to listen to their parents. If they have the specific rules and guidelines in place, there is a better chance they might listen to them. (18, Female, P2)

A lot of people who don’t have a really supportive relationship with their parents, they haven’t been taught these kind of rules. They haven’t had the enforcement from family: they are going to need some enforcement options. (18, Female, P2)

Where parents were perceived as supportive, there was also still an expectation that there would be some level of enforcement from them. For instance, when asked about how their parents would respond if they were to tell them they had breached GDL restrictions, young drivers made the following comments:

“we have a strong relationship and they’d appreciate me telling them. They would punish me.” (17, Male, P1)

“[I’d be] ashamed. Hate lying to my parents; hate the thought of disappointing my parents” (18, Female, P1).

One participant discussed what her parents had actually done in response to her revealing a GDL breach:

“I drove one night after drinking a little bit. Mum was quite cross and put restrictions on my driving for a little while – no driving for a month unless it was essential.” (Female, P1)

These responses suggest that, at least some, parents step into a policing role when necessary, as evidenced by the imposition of consequences (a driving ban). The importance to young drivers of maintaining the parent’s good opinion while their child is provisionally licensed is important, the higher up officials to enforce them. Teenagers aren’t always going to listen to their parents. If they have the specific rules and guidelines in place, there is a better chance they might listen to them.

In a focus group, a participant gave an example where he thought the police should have approached his infringement differently, issuing a warning to him for not carrying his licence rather than the formal sanction that had been imposed:

This participant’s comment acknowledges the role of police as enforcers of formal rules and prevention of deliberate law breaking. However, at the same time, the suggestion that a caution could have been issued instead of a sanction suggests a desire for police to operate with a more parental/developmental approach, taking into account his normal intentions to comply, and rewarding the spirit of his approach to the restrictions rather than adopting a punitive and rule-bound stance. He does not appear to consider that avoiding the punishment on this occasion means that he will likely continue to engage in the behaviour in the future.

Discussion and conclusion

The results of this study suggest that parental involvement while their child is provisionally licensed is important, particularly in terms of encouraging compliance with GDL laws. Young people perceived that their parents used a variety of strategies and styles to support them in remaining
safe and complying with the restrictions on their licences. Formal GDL restrictions could be adhered to by utilising absolute rules (i.e. ‘just don’t drink and drive’), or drawing on parental support and advice. Some parents appeared to provide restrictions that complemented the legal ones but which were tailored to their child (e.g. “Then they’d just give me a curfew of around 10pm during the week and home in time for the passenger restrictions on the weekends.”).

Traffic violations are influenced by a number of factors apart from the law including other needs that are more urgent, they are unaware of the law or they accidentally break the law (Wells & Savigar, 2019). However, P-planters in this study generally seemed accepting of formal police enforcement of restrictions, and particularly were able to see the necessity of this in order to compensate when (other) young drivers had not developed self-regulatory compliance, or when deliberate violation occurred. Several participants highlighted that they felt, or would feel, uncomfortable if their parents found out that they had disobeyed the GDL restrictions. This is consistent with work by Allen et al. (2017) indicating that the emotion shame plays a mediating role in young driver compliance within a deterrence theory framework. Other authors have also noted that emotional factors influence offending behaviour. For instance, Freeman et al. (2006) noted that participants felt guilty after engaging in drinking and driving behaviours. Furthermore, qualitative research conducted with Australian drivers identified that social punishments such as embarrassment and breaching the trust of others influences speeding behaviour (Fleiter, Lennon, & Watson, 2010). Therefore, there appears to be potential to explore how these social feedback forms can be used to influence novice driver behaviour. Additionally, novice drivers recognised parental attempts to support them to comply with the restrictions of GDL.

This study has highlighted, consistent with previous work (Allen, et al, 2017; Bates, et al., 2017), that young drivers are concerned about their parents becoming informed of any traffic infringements if they occur. This indicates that there is significant potential for an intervention based on a third party policing framework (Ransley & Mazerolle, 2009). In this particular context, policing agencies would develop partnerships with parents meaning that the parents would become the third party. While the presence of a legal lever is important within this framework (Mazerolle, 2014), this research suggests that the existence of the GDL provisional phase is not sufficient as a legal lever. While some parents take on a policing function, it does not appear to be necessarily widespread. Thus, the introduction of explicit legal levers at this stage of the licensing process would enable police to access parental resources and force them to encourage compliance by their children is needed. In many contexts, police do not activate the use of the legal lever (Mazerolle, 2014) but for third party policing to work effectively within this context, there would need to be more active involvement from police agencies in encouraging parental participation and monitoring of their child.

It is possible that some parental reluctance to become more involved in managing their child’s compliance with road laws is associated with their children becoming legal adults during the provisional phase and the parents feeling that their authority is less legitimate once this occurs. If police were to be more definite in their appeal to parents, this could provide at least some parents with a greater sense of legitimacy in relation to maintaining their current rule-setting or monitoring role. There is some evidence to support this assertion in the child restraint area with legislation having a positive effect on compliance levels and raising parental awareness of the need to ensure children remain in specific restraints for longer (Lennon, 2012).

Encouraging parents to engage more comprehensively in enforcement activities may also reduce the number of novice drivers who avoid being punished for committing offences. Previous research has indicated that punishment avoidance, either directly or vicariously, encourages individuals to continue to engage in the illegal behaviour (e.g. Armstrong, Watling, & Davey, 2018; Freeman, Kaye, Truelove, & Davey, 2017; Szogi et al., 2017; Watling, Palk, Freeman, & Davey, 2010).

While this study is encouraging for the development of interventions using a third party policing approach, there are some limitations associated with this study. Firstly, this is a preliminary study, involving a cohort that tends to come from families with well engaged parents and thus the young drivers might be more compliant generally and underrepresent young drivers who are less likely to conform. This is partly a result of the voluntary nature of the recruitment processes and is also possibly influenced by the level of education of our sample (first year university students). Secondly, the sample was disproportionately female, which therefore may not adequately account for the young male provisional licensing experience. This is particularly important to consider given the greater crash involvement of young male drivers and their more likely engagement in risky breaches of road rules (Shope & Bingham, 2008). Finally, the sample was obtained from within a capital city and may therefore not reflect the challenges facing rural and remote residents, such as the increased crash risk of rural drivers (Chen, Berrocal, Bingham, & Song, 2014). The challenges of reduced access to alternative modes of transport and greater driving distances may also fall disproportionately on young rural and regional drivers during their provisional licence periods, and make compliance with GDL more difficult for them compared to their urban counterparts. We note, for example, that young people in our sample reported that they had the most difficulty complying with the passenger restriction.

We would expect this would be even more pronounced for young people in regional and rural locations.

Future research could consider which other partnerships may be useful for novice drivers. For instance, peers have been found to be a strong influence on novice drivers (e.g. Curry et al., 2012; Simons-Morton et al., 2012) and thus there appears to be scope to use peer relationships to influence driving behaviour (Buckley, Chapman, & Sheehan, 2014).

This study suggests that the interaction between novice drivers and their parents in relation to effective navigation and compliance with restrictions on provisional licences.
occurs in a manner that provides scope for the development of an intervention using Third Party Policing principles. This may ultimately improve compliance with GDL restrictions and road rules and thus safety.

**Funding:** This work was supported by the NRMA-ACT Road Safety Trust, Australia. This work has been prepared by the authors. It has not been endorsed and is not guaranteed by the Trustees.

**References**


Bates, L., Watson, B., & King, M. (2014). The role of parents and non-parents in the supervision of learner drivers in Australia. Accident Analysis & Prevention, 70, 40-45. doi:10.1016/j.aap.2014.03.004


Elvik, R. (2010). Why some road safety problems are more difficult to solve than others. Accident Analysis & Prevention, 42, 1089-1096.


Lennon, A. (2012). Has increasing the age for child passengers to wear child restraints improved the extent to which they are used? Results from an Australian focus group and survey study. Vulnerable Groups & Inclusion, 3(1), Article: 14975. doi:10.3402/vgi.v3i0.14975


