



FOR ABERDEENSHIRE

www.aberdeenshirecommunitysafety.org.uk

8 January, 2007

Copy of letter sent to individual MPs for North Scotland

Dear

I have been asked, as Chairman of the Aberdeenshire Community Safety Network Group which represents the seven Community Safety Groups operating in Aberdeenshire, to write to you to urge you to press for the law to be changed with regards to newly qualified drivers.

To date 62 deaths have occurred on Grampian's Roads last year, 25 were 25 years or under and 37 were over 25. This means that 40% of the fatalities last year have been 25 years or under which shows a disproportionate number of young people dying on our roads. This is despite all the hard-hitting initiatives which have taken place locally.

We feel that the only way to help prevent this carnage is to introduce strict regulations for newly qualified drivers so that they get the opportunity to gain driving experience. Such regulations could include compulsory 'P' plates for a fixed period of time after passing the Driving Test, restrictions on the size of car engine and modifications to it and not being allowed to carry passengers for a fixed period.

I have enclosed a copy of the key findings from the OECD's Transport Research Centre document entitled "Young Drivers, The Road to Safety" published earlier this year. This document sums up very succinctly what the problems are and gives ways of dealing with them.

We urge you to set in motion the processes to address this harrowing subject and with your help we can stop the unnecessary carnage on our roads.

Yours sincerely,

Ron McKail

Chair Aberdeenshire Community Safety Partnership Network Group

YOUNG DRIVERS: The Road to Safety– ISBN 92-821-1334-5 - ECMT, 2006

The following is a synopsis of the key findings of the Joint OECD/ECMT Transport Research Centre's report, *Young Drivers: The Road to Safety*.

The great over-representation of young drivers in crashes and road fatalities is a serious public health problem that exacts an unacceptable toll in human, social and economic terms. Young drivers account for about 27% of driver fatalities across OECD countries, although people in the same age group represent only about 10% of the population. Furthermore, between 20% and 30% of total traffic fatalities result from crashes involving a young driver. Young male drivers' crash fatality rates are as much as three times those of young female drivers, and remain much higher even when adjusted to factor in their higher rates of exposure. In some countries, young males' relative risk, compared to that of other drivers, is increasing. The high levels of young driver risk result principally from factors of inexperience, age, and gender. This risk is aggravated by the circumstances under which many young people drive – young people, especially men, are over-represented in crashes at high speed, at night, with similarly aged passengers, involving alcohol, and often when not wearing seatbelts.

In addressing this problem:

- Important reductions in young driver risk will result from higher overall road safety levels, which require effective legislation, enforcement and standards, particularly dealing with speed, alcohol, drugs and seatbelts.
- Especially before the age of 18, any increase in the driving age will result in fewer crashes and fatalities. Licensing conditions for motorised two-wheeled vehicles should be sufficiently stringent to avoid migration toward less safe forms of transport.
- High levels of accompanied practice before licensing for solo driving, involving a variety of driving circumstances, will result in lower levels of fatalities. While at least 50 hours of pre-licensing practice are recommendable, experience in one country showed that increasing this to about 120 hours reduced crashes in the two years following licensing by about 40%.
- Exposure to risk is particularly great immediately following licensing for solo driving, and can be reduced by protective restrictions that are progressively lifted as the novice gains experience, as seen in graduated licensing (GDL) systems. Compared to older drivers, young drivers' crash risk increases at a much greater rate with each alcoholic drink consumed, and, thus, young, novice drivers should be subject to blood alcohol content (BAC) restrictions of no more than 0.2 g/l. Also, initially restricting driving with young passengers and at night has been shown to greatly reduce risk, and should be strongly considered.
- Young, novice drivers should be subject to initial probationary periods in which higher demerit points can be assigned for infractions or for non-compliance with licensing conditions, leading to concrete repercussions, such as loss of licence.
- The fundamental goals of the licensing system, including training and testing, should be to create drivers who are safe, as well as technically competent. Novice drivers need to gain greater self-assessment skills and understanding of the factors behind risk.

- Persuasive communications should accompany other countermeasures, with a view to changing attitudes and creating greater understanding of risk, noting that attitudes regarding safety are formed years before the driving age, and are highly influenced by role models' behaviour.
- Important new reductions in young driver risk could result from technological applications, such as Intelligent Speed Adaptation, Adaptive Cruise Control, Electronic Stability Control, black boxes, alco-locks and smart cards. More research should be conducted in this area, particularly focusing on the impact on young drivers.
- Non-road-safety measures, such as the availability of public transport at reasonable cost and regulations regarding the availability of alcohol, can also reduce young drivers' risk exposure.
- Despite the demonstrated potential to save many lives, road safety measures are seldom popular prior to their implementation. Thus, strong political leadership will be required to address the challenge of young driver risk. The public should be engaged on the basis of research-based evidence showing the costs and benefits of given countermeasures, and of inaction.
- The greatest absolute growth in young driver risk, fatalities and injuries can be expected in non- OECD countries, including some that are members of the ECMT. International co-operation can reduce the costs of understanding the young driver problem and developing effective countermeasures. All countries need to co-operate in promoting best practices to reduce risk internationally.