



PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**Law Reform, Road and Community Safety
Committee**

Inquiry into lowering the probationary driving age in Victoria to seventeen

Parliament of Victoria
Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee

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Committee functions

The Victorian Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee (the Committee) is established under the *Parliamentary Committees Act 2003* (the Act).

The Committee comprises seven members of Parliament: five from the Legislative Assembly and two from the Legislative Council.

Section 13 of the Act sets out the functions of the Committee:

1. The functions of the Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee are, if so required or permitted under this Act, to inquire into, consider and report to the Parliament on any proposal, matter or thing concerned with –
 - a. legal, constitutional or parliamentary reform;
 - b. the administration of justice;
 - c. law reform;
 - d. the use of drugs, including the manufacture, supply or distribution of drugs;
 - e. the level or causes of crime or violent behaviour
 - f. road trauma;
 - g. safety on roads and related matters
2. It is not a function of the Committee to inquire into, consider or report to the Parliament on any proposal, matter or thing concerned with:
 - a. the joint standing orders of the Parliament
 - b. the standing orders or rules of practice of the Council or the Assembly

Committee membership



Mr Geoff Howard MP
Chair
Buninyong



Mr Bill Tilley MP
Deputy Chair
Benambra



Hon Martin Dixon MP
Nepean



Mr Khalil Eideh MLC
Western Metropolitan



Ms Fiona Patten MLC
Northern Metropolitan



Ms Natalie Suleyman MP
St Albans



Mr Murray Thompson MP
Sandringham

Committee secretariat

Staff

Ms Yuki Simmonds, Executive Officer (from 13 July 2016)

Mr Andrew Homer, Acting Executive Officer (until 8 July 2016)

Ms Natalie Lilford, Research Officer (from 14 November 2016)

Mr John Aliferis, Research Officer (until 30 September 2016)

Ms Christianne Andonovski, Administrative Officer (from 22 August 2016)

Ms Sarah Kate Terry, Administrative Officer (until 8 July 2016)

Committee contact details

Address Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee
Parliament House, Spring Street
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

Phone 61 3 8682 2846

Email lrrcsc@parliament.vic.gov.au

Web www.parliament.vic.gov.au/lrrcsc

This report is available on the Committee's website.

Contents

Preliminaries

Committee functions	iii
Committee membership	v
Committee secretariat	vi
Terms of reference	xi
Chair's foreword	xiii
Executive summary	xv
Acronyms	xix
Findings and Recommendations	xxi

1 Introduction 1

1.1. Inquiry themes	2
1.2. The inquiry process	4
1.3. Outline of report	4

2 Young people, transport and mobility 5

2.1 Young people delaying licensing	5
2.1.1 Barriers to licensing	6
2.1.2 Declining relevance of licensing in some contexts	8
2.2 Adequacy of transport infrastructure and services in regional, rural and outer-suburban areas	10
2.2.1 Transport disadvantage	12
2.3 Broader context of disadvantage for young people in non-urban areas	15
2.3.1 Education	15
2.3.2 Employment	17
2.3.3 Lack of evidence of link between earlier licensure and employment rates	19
2.4 Potential effects of earlier licensing	21
2.4.1 Missed and under-utilised employment opportunities	21
2.4.2 Effect on employability and job retention	23
2.4.3 Issues in border areas	24
2.4.4 Social mobility and stronger communities	25
2.4.5 Access to extra-curricular commitments	26
2.4.6 Pressure on families and support networks	27

3 Graduated licensing schemes 29

3.1 Development of GLS	29
3.1.1 General GLS features	30
3.2 The GLS in Victoria	31
3.2.1 Development	32
3.2.2 Graduated phases	33
3.2.3 Exemptions to requirements	35

3.2.4	Reviews of the Victorian GLS	36
3.3	The GLS in other Australian states and territories	37
3.3.1	Australian Capital Territory (ACT)	37
3.3.2	New South Wales (NSW)	38
3.3.3	Northern Territory (NT)	39
3.3.4	Queensland	40
3.3.5	South Australia (SA)	41
3.3.6	Tasmania	43
3.3.7	Western Australia (WA)	43
3.4	Analysis of the GLS model and components	44
3.4.1	2015 Austroads Report: analysis of individual GLS components	44
3.4.2	2014 National Policy Framework for GLS: structured guidance for GLS improvement	45
3.4.3	Towards national consistency	45
3.5	Strengthening Victoria's GLS	46
3.5.1	Night driving	47
3.5.2	Extending peer passenger restrictions	52
3.5.3	Greater penalties and stricter standards for novice drivers	55
4	Young people and road trauma	57
4.1	Young drivers and road trauma	57
4.1.1	Harm to themselves	58
4.1.2	Harm to others	63
4.2	High risk crash factors	64
4.2.1	Brain development of young people	65
4.2.2	Age versus experience	69
4.2.3	Intentional risk taking	71
4.2.4	Alcohol	72
4.2.5	Rural road trauma	75
4.2.6	Vehicle safety	77
4.3	Minimum probationary licensing age	78
4.3.1	Licensing age in international jurisdictions	78
4.3.2	Link between licensing age and the road toll	79
5	Improving young people's access to opportunities through transport mobility	81
5.1	Licensing	81
5.1.1	Lowering the Victorian probationary driving age	81
5.1.2	Exemption to the minimum probationary driving age	83
5.1.3	Supporting young people to become safe, independent drivers	85
5.1.4	Encouraging young people to drive safer vehicles	91
5.2	Public transport	92
5.2.1	Regional Network Development Plan	94
5.2.2	School Bus Program	95
5.2.3	Community transport	96

Appendices

1	List of submissions	101
2	List of witnesses	105
3	Australian jurisdictions summary table	109
4	Road trauma estimates for lowering the licensing age in Victoria from 18 years to 17 years	117

Bibliography	119
---------------------	------------

Extract of proceedings	131
-------------------------------	------------

Minority Report	133
------------------------	------------

Terms of reference

Inquiry into lowering the probationary driving age in Victoria to seventeen

That under section 33 of the *Parliamentary Committees Act 2003*, the Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee is required to inquire into, consider and report, no later than 30 November 2016,* on —

1. The impacts of lowering the probationary driving age in Victoria to 17, including —
 - (a) reviewing the licence structures in other Australian states, particularly the probationary driving age;
 - (b) assessing the links between the existing 18 year old probationary driving age and high youth unemployment in regional areas;
 - (c) reviewing the impacts of separating the legal driving age and legal drinking age;
 - (d) considering relevant international licensing models and the positive and negative impacts of such; and
 - (e) assessing the correlation between a reduced probationary driving age and the road toll;
2. The adequacy of current transport infrastructure and services available to people of non-driving age, particularly in regional Victoria;
3. Strategies to remove barriers for people of non-driving age to access employment, study and training.

Received from the Legislative Council of the 58th Parliament, 9 December 2015.

*The reporting date was extended to 31 March 2017.

Chair's foreword

Victoria is the only jurisdiction in Australia that has a minimum probationary driving age of 18. This is regarded as a significant component of the State's approach to road safety, which is recognised as at the forefront of Australian efforts to reduce road trauma. Although for many young people in rural and regional areas with poor public transport options, the inability to drive independently affects their capacity to fully engage with employment, education and social opportunities.

It is in the context of these concerns that the Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee received the Terms of Reference for this inquiry. A key focus was to consider the value of a lowered probationary driving age as a way to enhance young people's access to opportunities. The Committee also explored the road safety risks likely to result from a probationary driving age of 17 years in Victoria. There were differing opinions among the Members about the safety risks, as reflected in the Extract of Proceedings, but the majority view was to recommend that the Victorian Government lower the probationary driving age to 17 years.

The Committee was, however, in full agreement that if the Government does not lower the driving age to 17 years, it should introduce an exemption process that allows young people to apply for a probationary licence at 17 years based on grounds of undue hardship. Either option should facilitate opportunities for 17 year-olds to undertake employment, education or training.

The Committee deliberated on how to achieve improved road safety for learner and probationary drivers and made a number of recommendations to strengthen the already world-leading Victorian graduated licence scheme. This includes placing greater restrictions on probationary drivers, improving the 120 hour supervised driving experience for learner drivers and encouraging young people to purchase safer vehicles. It is my belief that these initiatives will contribute to Victoria achieving continued reductions in road trauma.

The Committee was also cognizant of the need to support young people experiencing disadvantage to become safe, independent drivers and to access affordable and reliable vehicles. Recommendations to this effect, combined with recommendations that focus more broadly on transport mobility, and not only on licensing, aim to enhance young people's capacity to contribute to their community and make positive transitions into adult life.

The Committee is grateful to everyone who shared their time, expertise and ideas during the inquiry through written submissions and at public hearings. In particular, the Committee wishes to thank the many young people who shared their views and experiences. Their evidence was both insightful and valued by the Committee.

I sincerely thank the Deputy Chair, Mr Bill Tilley MP, and my fellow Committee Members, the Honourable Martin Dixon MP, Mr Khalil Eideh MLC, Ms Fiona Patten MLC, Ms Natalie Suleyman MP and Mr Murray Thompson MP for their commitment to this inquiry.

The Committee also thanks the secretariat for their hard work throughout the inquiry, including Ms Yuki Simmonds, Executive Officer; Ms Natalie Lilford, Research Officer; Mr John Aliferis, Research Officer; and Ms Christianne Andonovski, the Committee Administrative Officer. I also acknowledge Mr Andrew Homer and Ms Sarah Terry for their secretariat support during the initial months of the inquiry.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Geoff Howard', with a stylized, flowing script.

Mr Geoff Howard MP
Chair
March 2017

Executive summary

Obtaining a probationary licence is an important rite of passage for many people. The ability to drive independently can improve access to employment and study, promote connectivity and enhance the autonomy and wellbeing of young people. This is particularly pertinent in rural, regional and outer-suburban areas where young people are at greater risk of experiencing ‘transport disadvantage’ due to sparse and unreliable public transport options. Victoria is the only jurisdiction in Australia with a minimum probationary driving age of 18 years.

The Terms of Reference for this inquiry asked the Committee to investigate the impacts of lowering the probationary driving age in Victoria, including assessing the link between the driving age of 18 and youth unemployment in regional areas and the correlation between a reduced probationary driving age and the road toll. The Committee was also asked to review the adequacy of transport infrastructure and services available to young people in regional Victoria; and to canvass strategies to remove barriers for young people to access employment, study and training.

The Committee received evidence from a broad range of stakeholders reflecting support for and against lowering the probationary driving age. These stakeholders included government departments, road safety research and academic agencies, industry representative groups, not-for-profit organisations and individual members of the community. Many young people shared their views and experiences with the Committee, the majority of whom were either secondary students or undertaking further training and apprenticeships. Almost all of them were gaining experience on the roads as learner drivers or had recently obtained their probationary licence.

From early on in the inquiry, there were clear tensions in the evidence between seeking to reinforce young people’s safety on the roads, and maximising their transport mobility to encourage them to participate in the community in a meaningful way. Both positions share the objective of supporting young people to make a positive transition into adult life. This was the underlying basis for the Committee’s investigations.

The Committee did not receive macro-level evidence of a link between Victoria’s higher driving age and youth unemployment rates in regional areas. However, it heard persuasive evidence that young people in non-urban areas are at greater risk of experiencing disadvantage than those in urban areas. Various stakeholders informed the Committee that without a licence, some young people missed out on employment and education opportunities or were limited in the types of employment they could obtain. The Committee also heard that many employers prefer to employ young people who can drive independently. This was concerning to the Committee, particularly in the context of accessing traineeships and apprenticeships, which provide important and popular career pathways for rural and regional young people.

The Committee came to the conclusion that licensing is a gateway to mobility for many young people in non-urban areas, and that mobility is essential for young people to access opportunities for their future. The central recommendation of this report is therefore that the probationary driving age in Victoria be lowered to 17 years.

From a road safety perspective, the Committee is aware that young drivers aged 17 to 25 years are over-represented in road trauma data across Australia. A reoccurring theme in the evidence referred to the physical, cognitive and psychosocial changes that occur throughout adolescence, and the impact these can have on the crash risk of young drivers. The Committee also heard, however, that the majority of young drivers aim to drive safely and most successfully progress from their learner's permit to a probationary licence and finally to full unrestricted licence without major incident. With this in mind, a key discussion point throughout the Committee's investigations was the unique risks associated with 17 year-old drivers compared to those aged 18 years. The Committee does not believe there is sufficient evidence to indicate a significant difference in the risk levels between the two age groups. Rather, the Committee believes that quality experience is essential to ensuring the safety outcomes of young drivers.

The Committee commends the role of Victoria's graduated licensing scheme in enhancing the safety of young drivers. Australia has a strong culture of graduated licensing, with each jurisdiction's system varying slightly across the country. Victoria's scheme is recognised as one of the most comprehensive in the world, although the Committee believes it can be strengthened further and recommends a number of additional requirements, including:

- changing the peer passenger restriction from one passenger to no passengers for the duration of the probationary one (P1) phase
- restricting P1 drivers from driving between 10 pm and 5 am, unless for employment, study or other authorised purposes.

Each of these changes reflect widely-supported models of best practice, underpinned by a strong evidentiary basis, and with comparable examples in Australia and world-wide. The Committee is also of the view that young people should be better supported on the roads by improving the quality of the 120 hour driving experience for learner drivers, and encouraging young people to purchase safer vehicles.

Throughout the Inquiry, the Committee heard about the important role that the community-based L2P program plays in assisting disadvantaged young people to progress to their probationary licence. Many stakeholders advised the Committee of the program's success but identified limitations with its funding model and eligibility criteria that adversely affect the program's reach. In response, the Committee recommends that the program be reviewed to ensure it can effectively meet identified needs. The Committee also recommends that additional support be provided to young people who are experiencing transport disadvantage but whom with access to a reliable vehicle could potentially secure and maintain employment.

The Committee is also aware of the benefits likely to arise from focussing more broadly on transport mobility, and not only on licensing, for young people in non-urban areas. Investment in community transport initiatives, such as more targeted utilisation of the School Bus Program, would contribute to improved transport mobility for young people of non-driving age and those with limited access to private transport options.

The Committee believes this suite of recommendations will work towards enhancing the transport mobility of young people, while introducing new, complementary safeguards to ensure Victoria maintains its high standards of road safety.

Acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
AEB	Auto Emergency Braking
BAC	Blood Alcohol Concentration
BSL	Brotherhood of St Laurence
CARRS-Q	Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety - Queensland
CASR	Centre for Automotive Safety Research
C.A.R	Community Arranged Ride
ESC	Electronic Stability Control
EU	European Union
GDL	Graduated Driver Licensing
GLS	Graduated Licensing Scheme
GVM	Gross Vehicle Mass
HLDI	Highway Loss Data Institute
HPT	Hazard Perception Test
IIHS	Insurance Institute for Highway Safety
ITS	Institute of Transport Studies (Monash University)
L	Learner's Permit
L2P	L2P Learner Driver Mentoring Program
MRI	Magnetic Resonance Imaging
MUARC	Monash University Accident Research Centre
NSW	New South Wales
NSC	Nillumbik Shire Council
NT	Northern Territory
NZ	New Zealand
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PTA	Peninsula Transport Assist
P1	Probationary Licence One
P2	Probationary Licence Two
PDA	Practical Driving Assessment
PTV	Public Transport Victoria
QLD	Queensland
RACV	Royal Automobile Club of Victoria
RMIT	Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology

RNDP	Regional Network Development Plan
SA	South Australia
SBP	School Bus Program
TAC	Transport Accident Commission
TAFE	Tertiary and Further Education
TARS	Transport and Road Safety Research
TAS	Tasmania
TIS	Traffic Incident System
ToR	Terms of Reference
UCSR	Used Car Safety Rating
UNSW	University of NSW
US	United States
VAGO	Victorian Auditor-General's Office
VFF	Victorian Farmers Federation
VIC	Victoria
WA	Western Australia
WCC	Whittlesea Community Connections
YACVic	Youth Affairs Council of Victoria

Findings and Recommendations

2 Young people, transport and mobility

FINDING 1: Young people in non-urban areas may be at greater risk of disadvantage than those in metropolitan areas due to a number of factors, including issues of accessibility..... 18

FINDING 2: There is no macro-level evidence to support a link between early licensure and higher levels of employment. 20

FINDING 3: Accessible transport options may make a real difference to the social connectivity and healthy development of young people in rural and regional areas.. ...26

FINDING 4: For a small group of young people and their families, the ability to drive independently from 17 years would have a significant positive impact..28

3 Graduated licensing schemes

FINDING 5: The Victorian graduated licencing scheme is recognised as the leading system in Australia.37

RECOMMENDATION 1: Night driving restrictions between 10 pm and 5 am be introduced for drivers at the probationary P1 phase, accompanied by reasonable exemptions where appropriate. 51

FINDING 6: An increase of the requirement for supervised night-driving hours for learner drivers from ten hours to 20 hours is an important addition to the Victorian graduated licensing scheme.....52

RECOMMENDATION 2: Probationary one drivers be restricted from carrying any peer passengers.55

4 Young people and road trauma

RECOMMENDATION 3: The Victorian Government investigate the role of young drivers in fatal and serious injury crashes, as well as the contributing factors to the decline in young driver fatalities across Australia. The results of this research be made publicly available.....62

FINDING 7: The brain development theory does not provide convincing evidence of differing risk levels or safe driving capacity between 17 and 18 year-olds.69

FINDING 8: The Committee acknowledges the relevant and distinct effects of age and experience on the crash risk of young newly-licensed drivers, but is of the view that experience has a stronger effect than age. Quality experience is essential to ensuring the safety outcomes of young drivers. 71

FINDING 9: Separating the drinking age and minimum probationary driving age is unlikely to result in further road safety outcomes for young newly-licensed drivers... 75

FINDING 10: There is insufficient evidence or current data that allows authorities to quantify the impact of lowering the probationary driving age from 18 to 17 on fatalities and serious injuries on Victorian roads... 80

5 Improving young people's access to opportunities through transport mobility

RECOMMENDATION 4: The Victorian Government lower the minimum probationary driving age to 17... 83

RECOMMENDATION 5: If the Victorian Government does not lower the probationary driving age to 17, it should introduce an exemption process into the *Road Safety Act 1986* that allows young people to apply for a probationary licence at 17 years based on grounds of undue hardship. ... 85

RECOMMENDATION 6: The Transport Accident Commission and VicRoads review the L2P driver training program and consider whether the existing funding model, in addition to the program eligibility criteria, allows individual programs to effectively meet identified needs. ... 88

RECOMMENDATION 7: The Victorian Government review how it can support driving supervisors, through education or training opportunities, to improve the quality of the 120 hour supervised driving experience for learner drivers. ... 89

RECOMMENDATION 8: The Victorian Government develop a pilot vehicle access scheme that provides young people with the opportunity to access an affordable and reliable vehicle in order to secure and maintain employment. The pilot scheme should target young people who have limited means to purchase their own vehicle and who are experiencing transport disadvantage. ... 90

RECOMMENDATION 9: The Victorian Government develop targeted initiatives to facilitate the purchase of safer vehicles by young people. ... 92

RECOMMENDATION 10: The Victorian Government specifically target young people from rural Victoria to participate in the local transport forums as part of the Regional Network Development Plan to learn more about the access issues they experience in accessing employment, education and training, and social activities. ... 95

RECOMMENDATION 11: Public Transport Victoria and the Department of Education and Training publicly review how the School Bus Program could be better utilised to meet the transport needs of young people from rural areas to access employment, education and training opportunities. ... 96

FINDING 11: Community transport solutions can play an important role in enhancing transport mobility for young people in rural and regional areas, particularly when focussed on individual needs. The value in these transport solutions is underpinned by greater utilisation of existing resources and the involvement of local agencies, in consultation with the community, to identify and respond to transport barriers. ... 99

On 9 December 2015, the Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee received Terms of Reference (ToR) to inquire into the impacts of lowering the probationary driving age in Victoria. The Committee was asked to assess the links between the existing probationary driving age and high youth unemployment in regional areas; and the correlation between a reduced probationary driving age and the road toll. Subsequent amendments to the ToR also required the Committee to consider the adequacy of transport infrastructure and services available to young people of non-driving age in regional Victoria; and strategies to remove barriers for these young people to access employment, study and training.

Victoria is arguably at the forefront of road safety achievements in Australia, supported in large part by the Victorian Government's commitment to the Safe System approach in the last decade. The overall vision of this approach is that no one should be killed or seriously injured on the roads. It is underpinned by systems thinking that aims to understand and enhance how the components of roads, vehicles, road users and speed interact within the road transport system to achieve safety for all road users. Victoria's latest iteration of the Safe System model is *Towards Zero 2016-2020: Victoria's Road Safety Strategy and Action Plan (Towards Zero)*. Towards Zero aims to reduce Victoria's road toll to less than 200 deaths by 2020 and reduce serious injuries by 15 per cent.¹ In 2016, 292 people died on Victorian roads.

Victoria is the only jurisdiction in Australia with a probationary driving age of 18 years. Most other states and territories allow young people to drive independently from 17 years, with the exception of the Northern Territory, which has a minimum probationary driving age of 16.5 years. An older licensing age is deemed an important component of Victoria's approach to road safety, however, it can have a limiting effect on the mobility of some young people. In rural, regional and outer-suburban areas where public transport options are limited, young people are at a greater risk of experiencing transport disadvantage. Transport disadvantage refers to a difficulty accessing reliable and affordable transport. A key focus of this inquiry was the likely contribution of lowering the driving age in Victoria to minimise transport disadvantage.

Throughout the inquiry, many young people shared their views and experiences with the Committee. The majority of them were secondary school students, and some were undertaking further training and apprenticeships. Almost all of them were gaining experience on the roads as learner drivers, or had recently attained their probationary licence. The evidence they provided was both insightful and valued by the Committee. Many expressed frustration about the sparse and unreliable public transport options in their local areas, and its impact on their

¹ State Government of Victoria, *Towards Zero 2016/2020: Victoria's Road Safety Strategy & Action Plan*, Melbourne, 2016, p. 9.

capacity to secure employment, and participate in sporting, social and other recreational activities outside of school hours.² Many of these young people expressed support for a lowered probationary driving age. On the other hand, some young people told the Committee they did not feel that they or their peers would have gained the appropriate levels of experience or maturity to drive independently at 17.³

The Committee received considerable evidence from a broad range of stakeholders reflecting support for and against lowering the probationary driving age. From early on in the inquiry, there were clear tensions between seeking to reinforce young people's safety on the roads, and maximising their transport mobility to encourage them to participate in the broader community in a meaningful way. Both positions share the objective of supporting young people to make a positive transition into adult life. This was the underlying basis for the Committee's investigations.

1.1. Inquiry themes

Three key themes emerged from the Committee's investigations. These included:

- ensuring the safety of Victorians on the road, particularly young people
- the central role of transport mobility in young people's access to opportunities, particularly in Victorian rural and regional areas
- the role of licensing as a gateway to mobility in these areas.

The first theme, road safety, is at the core of the opposition to lowering the probationary driving age. Fatal crash statistics for people aged between 17 and 25 years have significantly declined over the past ten years, as have annual deaths from crashes involving young drivers. However, this group of young people continue to be over-represented in road crash data compared to the rest of the population. Further, fatal crash rates in rural and regional areas remain high for all drivers, which was concerning to the Committee given the regional focus of the inquiry.

2 Bryce Pace, Student, Brauer College, *Transcript of evidence*, 8 September 2016; Cael Green, *Submission*, no. 72, 26 May 2016; Charlie Lucas, *Submission*, no. 100, 9 June 2016; Courtney Fenton, *Submission*, no. 98, 9 June 2016; Dave Serpell, Individual Youth Advocate, Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, *Transcript of evidence*, 25 August 2016; Dylan Gravett, *Submission*, no. 96, 9 June 2016; Grace McKerral, *Submission*, no. 4, 4 April 2016; Jack Beer, Student, Wodonga Senior Secondary College, *Transcript of evidence*, 4 October 2016; Jack Christiansen, *Submission*, no. 48, 18 May 2016; Jack Hoogen, *Submission*, no. 46, 18 May 2016; Max Meyer, *Submission*, no. 71, 25 May 2016; Maxwell Tilley, *Submission*, no. 41, 18 May 2016; Nick Young, *Submission*, no. 39, 16 May 2016; Nicole Bradley, *Submission*, no. 19, 19 April 2016; Patrick Johnstone, *Submission*, no. 10, 8 April 2016; Phoebe Cody, Student, Brauer College, *Transcript of evidence*, 8 September 2016; Shaquile Singh, Student, Wodonga Senior Secondary College, *Transcript of evidence*, 4 October 2016; Taj Merrett, *Submission*, no. 95, 9 June 2016; Tate Canty, *Submission*, no. 99, 9 June 2016; Taylah Darmanin, *Submission*, no. 35, 10 May 2016; Thomas Pascoe, Student, Wodonga Senior Secondary College, *Transcript of evidence*, 4 October 2016; William Hornstra, *Submission*, no. 68, 25 May 2016.

3 Abbey Growden, *Submission*, no. 66, 25 May 2016; Dean Petrou, VCAL Student, East Doncaster Secondary College, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 August 2016; Dimitri Georgandis, *Submission*, no. 49, 18 May 2016; Josh Kleeberg, *Submission*, no. 45, 18 May 2016; Joshua Lanzon, VCAL Student, East Doncaster Secondary College, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 August 2016; Kyle Wignell, *Submission*, no. 50, 18 May 2016; Luke Diazikis, *Submission*, no. 51, 18 May 2016; Wajid Ali, *Submission*, no. 55, 18 May 2016.

Improvements in the safety outcomes for young drivers have resulted from various targeted interventions, but most notably the graduated licensing scheme (GLS). Victoria introduced a comprehensive GLS in 2007-08, which requires young drivers to gradually acquire safe driving experience through a staged approach, and over an extended period of time. These key components, alongside the supervisory nature of the scheme, enable young people to learn a highly complex set of skills under low risk conditions. Consequently, the majority of young people successfully progress from their learner's permit to a probationary licence and finally to a full unrestricted licence without major incident. With this in mind, a commonly asked question of stakeholders by the Committee was: what, if any, are the unique risks associated with 17 year-old drivers compared to those aged 18 years?

The second key theme of the inquiry relates to the role of transport mobility in young people's access to opportunities for employment, further education and training, and social connectedness. Related to this is the contribution of transport mobility in enhancing the autonomy of young people and their overall wellbeing. While this is important for all young Victorians, it is particularly pertinent for those living in rural and regional areas that are characterised by long distances and low population densities. Services that are readily available in metropolitan areas become difficult to sustain in rural and regional areas due to lower levels of demand. People are required to travel longer distances to access them or miss out altogether if transport is unreliable or non-existent. This is also an ongoing issue for those living in outer-suburban areas where rapid population growth has not typically been met with efficient and equitable public transport options.

The report *Access to Education for Rural Students* by the Victorian Auditor-General's Office, found that students in rural areas have not performed as well as their metropolitan peers for a long time, with distance and public transport impacting students' access to and participation in education.⁴ Throughout its investigations, the Committee was aware of this ongoing issue and was mindful of young people who leave school early and remain in these communities experiencing significant levels of unemployment in the future.⁵

Due to the dispersed nature of many rural and regional communities, it is very challenging to address all of their transport needs. Consequently, there is an increasing reliance on private transport options, which for young people of non-driving age usually means depending on family and friends. Rarely is this a viable option for many people. Consequently, licensing as a gateway to mobility in these areas is the third theme of the inquiry. A key area of interest for the Committee was the relationship, if any, between the higher probationary driving age in Victoria and social and economic disadvantage experienced by some young people. As such, the Committee reviewed the value and appropriateness of a reduced probationary driving age as a strategy to minimise the barriers of young people accessing opportunities.

4 Victorian Auditor-General, *Victorian Auditor-General's Report: Access to Education for Rural Students*, Melbourne, 2014, p. vii.

5 H Cuervo and J Wyn, *Young People Making it Work: Continuity and change in rural places*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 2012, p. 32.

1.2. The inquiry process

The Committee commenced its formal call for submissions in late March 2016 through an extensive campaign, which included advertising the ToR in *The Age*, *Herald Sun* and *The Weekly Times*, in addition to all regional newspapers. The inquiry was also promoted through Parliament of Victoria's social media including Facebook and Twitter.

The Committee received 102 submissions from a broad range of stakeholders, including secondary school students, government departments, not-for-profit organisations, road safety research and academic agencies, industry representative groups, and individual members of the community. A list of stakeholders that made submissions is provided in Appendix 1.

The Committee held seven days of public hearings, commencing in June 2016 and concluding in October 2016. Public hearings were held in Melbourne, Ballarat, Warrnambool and Wodonga. A list of public hearing participants is provided in Appendix 2.

The Committee is grateful to all of those individuals and organisations that generously shared their time, expertise and ideas during the inquiry, including the education institutions that hosted the Committee's regional public hearings.

1.3. Outline of report

The report is divided into five chapters, namely:

- Chapter one introduces the key themes of the inquiry and outlines the inquiry process.
- Chapter two considers the adequacy of public transport in non-urban areas, and the role of mobility in supporting young people in these areas, particularly to access education, training, employment and social opportunities.
- Chapter three provides an overview of road licensing systems for learner and probationary drivers in Australia, with particular attention to GLS, their overall effectiveness in improving road safety outcomes for young drivers and the effectiveness of individual GLS components.
- Chapter four focuses on road trauma and young people, including serious injury and fatality crash data involving young drivers, as well as crash risk and causal factors for young and newly-licensed drivers.
- Chapter five discusses strategies to improve mobility for young people in rural and regional areas in the context of licensing, public transport, place-based solutions, and other options.

Young people work towards their driver's licence for many and varied reasons. Among the reasons presented by stakeholders to the Committee were access to education, employment, study, training, and sporting, religious, social and family events. A driver's licence can also afford social status, enhance independence, and provide choice for young people.

Young people who are not yet able to drive independently usually rely on others—family, friends, colleagues, teachers, employers—to drive them to these events, or they use public transport, walk or cycle. Many young people reported to the Committee that they missed out on opportunities and events due to a lack of accessible transport.

This chapter canvasses the issues raised by Terms of Reference (1)(b) and (2), namely assessing the links between the existing 18 year-old probationary driving age and high youth unemployment in regional areas; and the adequacy of current transport infrastructure and services available to people of non-driving age, particularly in regional Victoria.

The Committee did not receive evidence of a macro-level link between Victoria's later licensing age and youth unemployment rates. However, throughout the inquiry, the Committee heard many micro-level examples of the impact and inconvenience of waiting until 18 to be licensed, particularly in areas with poor public transport infrastructure.

2.1 Young people delaying licensing

Despite the fact that Victoria's licencing age is a year higher than all other Australian jurisdictions, not all young people seek to attain their licence at 18 years. It was reported to the Committee that young people are increasingly delaying attainment of their probationary licence. VicRoads data shows that for the year of 2013-14, the mean licensing age in Victoria was 19.8 years.⁶ The Royal Automotive Club of Victoria (RACV) noted that in 2001, 53 per cent of 18 year olds were licensed, compared to 40 per cent in 2014.⁷ Licensing rates for people under 25 have dropped from 77 per cent to 66 per cent since 2000-01.⁸

6 Transport Accident Commission, *Submission*, no. 79, 27 May 2016, p. 17.

7 Brian Negus, General Manager Public Policy, Royal Automobile Club of Victoria, *Transcript of evidence*, 15 June 2016, p. 18.

8 Delbosc, A, 'Why are young Australians turning their back on the car?', *The Conversation*, 5 January 2016, viewed 18 May 2016, <theconversation.com/why-are-young-australians-turning-their-back-on-the-car-35468>.

Table 2.1 Licensing rates for young people in Victoria⁹

Age	Number of licence holders (June 2014)	Population (June 2014)	Licensing rate
17	n/a	70,533	n/a
18	29,274	73,246	40.0%
19	44,599	76,617	58.2%
20	51,361	77,982	65.9%
21	56,256	79,613	70.7%
22	59,437	82,894	71.7%
23	64,896	87,688	74.0%
24	67,094	89,183	75.2%
25	69,920	89,183	78.1%

Two of the key reasons identified for this downward trend are barriers to licensing, and the declining importance of driving for some young people.

2.1.1 Barriers to licensing

The Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic) referred in its submission to a recent survey by the RACV of unlicensed young adults, which found that reasons for not having a licence included ‘not liking to drive, being afraid of driving, being too busy, and finding the process of getting licence too difficult or expensive’.¹⁰ Importantly, the YACVic submission indicated that delaying licensing is not always a choice—for some, is ‘a sign of disadvantage’:

Some young adults cannot afford driving lessons, a car, petrol or insurance; others do not have a licensed adult who can support them to complete the 120 hours of practice for their learner period. Moreover, for some young people with disabilities or chronic health problems independent driving may not be possible, regardless of age.¹¹

Dr Alexa Delbosc from the Monash University Institute of Transport Studies (Monash ITS) explained to the Committee that changes to the licensing system, particularly the introduction of the graduated licensing scheme (GLS) and the 120 hour supervised driving requirement, play a role in lower licensing rates:

The fact that young people now have to get 120 supervised hours is an enormous barrier to being able to just pop behind the wheel.¹²

While acknowledging the safety benefits of the 120 hour obligation, the Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL) characterised it as a ‘very significant commitment’ for learner drivers and for their supervisors. The BSL estimated that

⁹ Jennifer Thompson, *Supplementary evidence*, VicRoads, 28 July 2016.

¹⁰ Youth Affairs Council Victoria, *Submission*, no. 76, 27 May 2016, p. 8.

¹¹ Georgie Ferrari, Chief Executive Officer, Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, *Transcript of evidence*, 25 August 2016, p. 110.

¹² Dr Alexa Delbosc, Institute of Transport Studies, Monash University, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 August 2016, p. 65.

a learner, starting at age 16 and finishing at age 18, would require a minimum of five hours per month of supervised driving. Given that some log book entries can be disqualified by VicRoads, and that most learners will not attain their learners permit immediately when they turn 16, the actual hours of supervision required could be far higher. Importantly, the BSL submission noted that the initial presumption that the 120 hours of supervision could easily be drawn from family resources is not a reasonable one for all Victorian families.¹³ The work and other childcare commitments of parents, particularly single parents, or those with disabilities, lack of access to a vehicle or perhaps inability to drive themselves can be significant barriers to learners relying on parents and family to supervise them for 120 hours.

The amplified effect of the 120 hour and other licensing requirements on Aboriginal people was reported by Professor Rebecca Ivers and Jake Byrne from the George Institute for Global Health who noted that licensing rates for Indigenous Australians is comparatively low:

... [some Aboriginal people] can face a number of barriers to getting a driver licence, including difficulty accessing identification documents, low levels of literacy and numeracy, the various costs associated with the graduated licensing system, lack of access to a car and a supervising driver, as well as outstanding debt.¹⁴

The Committee also heard that the 120 hour requirement may result in some young people driving unlicensed, particularly in areas where car dependency is high and few other transport options exist.¹⁵ The BSL submission summarised evidence relating to people who drive unlicensed, noting that they are typically people who have had their licence suspended, or who have never been licensed in the first place.¹⁶ Particularly in rural and regional areas, where distances are great, and where alternative forms of transport are limited or non-existent, it is foreseeable that people who find it difficult to meet the GLS requirements may take the risk of driving unlicensed.

Various stakeholders advised the Committee of the L2P program, which works across Victoria to support disadvantaged young people to progress to their probationary licence. Described by Tony Robinson, Senior Manager of Financial Inclusion at the BSL as a 'vital program',¹⁷ the L2P program matches learner drivers aged 16 to 21 with fully-licensed volunteer driving mentors. Using community-sponsored vehicles, the volunteers supervise learner drivers as they accrue 120 hours of driving experience.¹⁸

¹³ Brotherhood of St Laurence, *Submission*, no. 90, 31 May 2016, p. 7.

¹⁴ Ivers, R and Byrne, J, 'Indigenous Australians need a licence to drive, but also to work', *The Conversation*, 19 September 2014, viewed 20 January 2017, <theconversation.com/indigenous-australians-need-a-licence-to-drive-but-also-to-work-31480>.

¹⁵ Tony Robinson, Senior Manager, Financial Inclusion, Brotherhood of St Laurence, *Transcript of evidence*, 25 August 2016, p. 101.

¹⁶ Brotherhood of St Laurence, *Submission*, no. 90, 31 May 2016, p. 9.

¹⁷ Tony Robinson, Senior Manager, Financial Inclusion, Brotherhood of St Laurence, *Transcript of evidence*, 25 August 2016, p. 102.

¹⁸ VicRoads, 'L2P learner driver mentor program', viewed 25 January 2017, <www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/licences/your-ps/get-your-ps/preparing-for-your-licence-test/l2p-learner-driver-mentor-program>.

The Transport Accident Commission (TAC) funds the L2P programs, which are administered by VicRoads across the State. Local councils and community organisations are responsible for managing programs in their local areas. According to VicRoads, 66 L2P programs operate throughout Victoria, with 1800 young learner drivers participating in the program at any one time.¹⁹ In 2015, the Victorian Government committed \$16 million dollars in continued funding for the program over four years.²⁰

A number of stakeholders advised the Committee of the success of the program, not only in assisting young people to attain their licence but also its role in promoting the wellbeing of young people. Georgie Ferrari, the Chief Executive Officer of the YACVic, told the Committee:

...L2P is not just a driver training program. It also links disadvantaged young people with mentors to help build social connections and basic work-ready qualities like time keeping, confidence and English conversation. For example, in a 2014 evaluation of L2P, around 100 novice drivers who had taken part in the program were surveyed. Two-thirds of them agreed that in general they had become more responsible and confident as a result of L2P; half of them said the program has helped them to form more positive relationships with other people; and a quarter said that it had improved their focus on school or work.²¹

The Committee also heard that funding constraints mean that individual L2P programs are unable to assist all who approach them for help. While many community members generously commit their time as volunteer driving instructors, the high number of learners, each requiring 120 hours (in addition to time spent collecting and returning the vehicle), means that taking on one learner is a significant time commitment. Further, the costs associated with vehicle maintenance, fuel and other administrative costs prevent many L2P operations from expanding to meet demand.²² These issues are addressed further in chapter five.

2.1.2 Declining relevance of licensing in some contexts

The rigours of the licensing system are not the only reason why young people may delay attaining their licence. As noted above, licensing rates were already in steady decline before the introduction of the 120 hour supervised driving requirement in 2007. Dr Delbosc from Monash ITS considers other factors, such as generational changes to goals and life stages, as significant influences on the licensing behaviour of young people, noting that more young people are undertaking further study, in addition to partnering and having children later in life, compared to ten to 20 years ago:

¹⁹ VicRoads, *Submission*, no. 91, 6 June 2016, p. 41.

²⁰ Victorian Department of Treasury and Finance, *Victorian Budget 15/16: For Families*, Melbourne, 2015, p. 18.

²¹ Georgie Ferrari, Chief Executive Officer, Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, *Transcript of evidence*, 25 August 2016, p. 110.

²² Geoff Sharp, Chief Executive Officer, United Way Ballarat, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 September 2016, pp. 158-160.

Now most of those transitions are happening later in the 20s into 30s, and all of that means that you, in some cases, have less money for a car early on. You are worried about finishing your exams, travelling overseas and doing your studies, and you have potentially less need for a car until later in life.

...The attitude of the car as an aspirational status symbol is shifting ... people are perhaps more pragmatic about whether a car is right for them.²³

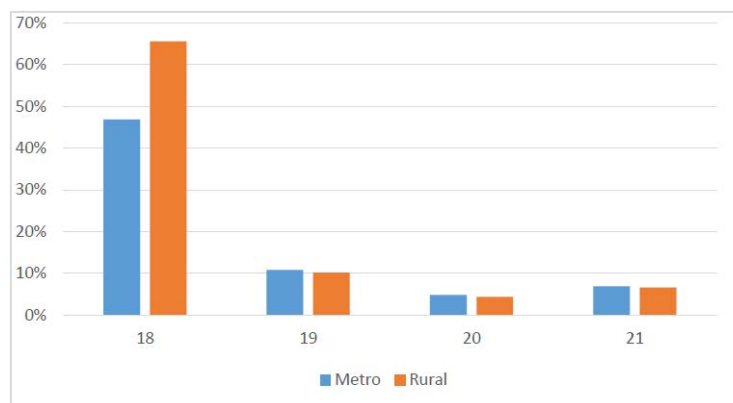
Other possible reasons for the delay in licensing may include:

- improvements in public transport and ridesharing technology such as Uber (only relevant in urban and some suburban areas)
- an increase in awareness of the environmental impact of driving, and a conscious choice of more sustainable alternatives such as walking and cycling (again far more relevant in urban and suburban areas where these alternatives are viable).²⁴

The Committee also heard that social connectivity for young people increasingly centres around an online presence, rather than a physical presence.²⁵ Where young people are *not* relying on being able to drive in order to access work or study, for example in inner-city Melbourne, it may be that this change in the nature of socialising means they have less need to drive to visit friends and socialise.

The Committee notes that the above shifts are likely to have significant impact only in urban and suburban areas where the availability of alternative forms of transport may render licensing less important. This is reflected in the difference in rural and urban licensing rates, noted in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1 Age when obtained first car licence as a percentage of the population, 2013-14²⁶



²³ Dr Alexa Delbosc, Institute of Transport Studies, Monash University, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 August 2016, p. 65.

²⁴ YACVic also identifies the increasing congestion on Melbourne's roads as a factor: Youth Affairs Council Victoria, *Submission*, no. 76, 27 May 2016, p. 8.. See also the discussion of the potential for licensing delay to encourage more sustainable travel options: Delbosc, A, 'Delay in getting driving licences opens door to more sustainable travel', *The Conversation*, 23 May 2016, viewed 23 May 2016, <theconversation.com/delay-in-getting-driving-licences-opens-door-to-more-sustainable-travel-57430>.

²⁵ Associate Professor Teresa Senserrick, Transport and Road Safety (TARS) Research UNSW, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 October 2016, p. 274.

²⁶ Loader, C, 'Trends in car ownership', viewed 18 May 2016, <chartingtransport.com/2011/08/07/trends-in-car-ownership/>.

Despite the overall downward trend in licensing rates, the Committee is in no doubt as to the continuing importance of licensing for many young people, particularly those based in rural and regional areas. The above graph shows the age people obtained their licence in 2013-14, as a percentage of the population. Young people from rural areas were far more likely to seek licensing as soon as possible, with 66 per cent of licence-holders obtaining their licence at 18, compared to 47 per cent of those in urban areas.

Deon Cameron, the L2P Co-ordinator for Warrnambool City Council, said he observed most learner drivers as having a certain 'desperation' to be licensed as soon as possible, for work, social and myriad other reasons.²⁷ This view was echoed by a number of young people from rural and regional areas who gave evidence to the Committee, with many accruing the 120 hours of driving experience in under 12 months.²⁸

2.2 Adequacy of transport infrastructure and services in regional, rural and outer-suburban areas

Rural and regional communities are extremely diverse, although they are typically characterised by long distances, low population densities and areas that are geographically isolated. Essential services and recreational facilities are typically based in regional centres, while many people live outside of these centres, on farms and in rural towns. Low population densities and dispersed population centres mean that the provision of public transport networks is less financially viable, and therefore far less comprehensive than in urban areas. Distances may be too long for use of active transportation, such as walking or cycling, and these longer distances also result in higher costs for motorised transportation.²⁹

As with rural and regional areas, the outer suburbs are also experiencing significant transport and mobility problems, with public transport networks not meeting the needs of the rapidly-growing suburban-fringe population.³⁰ According to the RACV, population growth has 'outpaced the provision of basic

²⁷ Deon Cameron, L2P Coordinator, Warrnambool City Council, *Transcript of evidence*, 8 September 2016, p. 203.

²⁸ Amanda Groux, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 September 2016, p. 134; Dave Serpell, Individual Youth Advocate, Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, *Transcript of evidence*, 25 August 2016, p. 118; Jack Beer, Student, Wodonga Senior Secondary College, *Transcript of evidence*, 4 October 2016, p. 232; Jacob Heard, Student, Ballarat and Queens Anglican Grammar School, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 September 2016, p. 173; Leah Purtell, Student, Ballarat and Queens Anglican Grammar School, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 September 2016, p. 173; Meg Brennan, Student, Ballarat and Queens Anglican Grammar School, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 September 2016, p. 173; Shaquille Singh, Student, Wodonga Senior Secondary College, *Transcript of evidence*, 4 October 2016, p. 235; Wendy Young, *Transcript of evidence*, 8 September 2016, p. 190.

²⁹ As pointed out in the submission from UNSW TARS, Victoria is more densely populated than other Australian jurisdictions, and Victoria does not contain any 'very remote' locations, according to the official definitions employed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 'Statistical Geography Fact Sheet: Remoteness Structure', viewed 1 February 2017, <www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/d3310114.nsf/home/remoteness+structure>.. See also Dr Alexa Delbosc, Institute of Transport Studies, Monash University, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 August 2016, p. 63; Currie, G, et al., *Rural and Regional Young People and Transport: Improving Access to Transport for Young People in Rural and Regional Australia*, National Youth Affairs Research Scheme (NYARS), Canberra, 2005.

³⁰ Professor Johanna Wyn, Director, Youth Research Centre, University of Melbourne, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 August 2016, p. 33.

infrastructure and services including public transport that is reliable, frequent and efficient'.³¹ A lack of services, combined with high population densities, can also result in crowded public transport services in the urban fringe. Residents in these areas also tend to be from lower socio-economic households, which can exacerbate transport stressors.³²

Brian Negus of the RACV told the Committee that the 'lack of public transport, lack of community transport ... is a key issue for the entire community', and that 'increasing public transport services ... and improved connectivity ... is key for people getting out of [and around] regional centres'.³³ The inadequacy of public transport services in non-urban areas was a common theme in the broader evidence presented to the Committee. Issues reported included:

- infrequent services
- unreliable services
- lack of inter-connectivity between different services
- lack of intra-regional connections
- inappropriate timetabling
- inconsistent ticketing and costs
- poor facilities and general experience.³⁴

The Committee also received evidence reaffirming that the inadequacy of public transport options is strongly linked to an increased dependence on private vehicles, amplified by the longer distances travelled in non-urban areas. People from these areas are largely car-dependent:

... outer suburban and country areas — in those parts of Victoria cars are like oxygen: you have to have a car; and kids are raised in an environment where they understand that is just an essential.³⁵

This is especially the case for families, many of whom have full- or part-time working parents, on farms or in other businesses, as well as children at various schools, with their own study, training and employment commitments. The Committee heard a number of accounts of the significant time-cost and pressure that doing all of the driving has on parents and supporters of young people. Brendan Patterson, a teacher from Euroa, gave some examples of the impact on local families:

³¹ Royal Automobile Club of Victoria Ltd, *Submission*, no. 40, 18 May 2016, p. 8.

³² Dr Jessie Mitchell, Policy Manager, Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, *Transcript of evidence*, 25 August 2016, p. 116; Professor Johanna Wyn, Director, Youth Research Centre, University of Melbourne, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 August 2016, p. 33; Tony Robinson, Senior Manager, Financial Inclusion, Brotherhood of St Laurence, *Transcript of evidence*, 25 August 2016, p. 100.

³³ Brian Negus, General Manager Public Policy, Royal Automobile Club of Victoria, *Transcript of evidence*, 15 June 2016, p. 19.

³⁴ Alan Fedda, Executive Director, Customer Experience, Public Transport Victoria, Presentation to Committee: 'Presentation to the Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee', 25 August 2016.

³⁵ Tony Robinson, Senior Manager, Financial Inclusion, Brotherhood of St Laurence, *Transcript of evidence*, 25 August 2016, p. 100.

I know of several families (many of whom are already on low incomes) in which one parent needs to forego work entirely in order to twice a day give their TAFE or university-aged children a lift to school—in many cases at least a 200 kms a day round trip. Apart from denying these parents an opportunity to work, it is extremely expensive and denies [them] the opportunity to ... contribute to volunteer and community activities.³⁶

2.2.1 Transport disadvantage

The ongoing difficulties caused by lack of public transportation options in non-urban areas places local residents at risk of ‘transport disadvantage’.³⁷ Transport disadvantage ‘is typically defined as a difficulty accessing transport as a result of cost, availability of services or poor physical accessibility’.³⁸ The impact of limited infrastructure is exacerbated by lower incomes and the higher cost of maintaining private transport:

A concentration of lower income households in outer-urban areas, coupled with poor public transport infrastructure, means that those least able to afford private transport are also those living in areas with the most inadequate public transport services.³⁹

Despite the impression of increased mobility and access that car ownership gives, there is much discussion in the literature on transport disadvantage highlighting the concept of ‘forced car ownership’, in which lack of options means that people live beyond their means or experience significant financial stress to meet the costs of running a private vehicle.⁴⁰ Ageing vehicles, increased maintenance costs and increasing costs of fuel all contribute to transport barriers, and limit affordable mobility.

The impacts of transport disadvantage are varied and broad-ranging, but certainly include difficulty accessing formal education, training and employment opportunities, lack of social and recreational outlets, and lack of access to other support services, such as health and wellbeing programs.

A reoccurring theme in the broader literature and evidence provided to the inquiry is that young people who have limited access to public and private transport options are at increased risk of transport disadvantage.⁴¹ Professor

³⁶ Brendan Paterson, *Submission*, no. 61, 20 May 2016, p. 1.

³⁷ Rosier, K and McDonald, M, *CAFCA resource sheet: The relationship between transport and disadvantage in Australia*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne, 2011.

³⁸ Rosier, K and McDonald, M, *CAFCA resource sheet: The relationship between transport and disadvantage in Australia*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne, 2011, p. 2.

³⁹ Rosier, K and McDonald, M, *CAFCA resource sheet: The relationship between transport and disadvantage in Australia*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne, 2011, p. 4.

⁴⁰ Rosier, K and McDonald, M, *CAFCA resource sheet: The relationship between transport and disadvantage in Australia*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne, 2011, p. 4.

⁴¹ Cuervo, H and Wyn, J, *Young People Making it Work: Continuity and change in rural places*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 2012; Currie, G, et al., *Rural and Regional Young People and Transport: Improving Access to Transport for Young People in Rural and Regional Australia*, National Youth Affairs Research Scheme (NYARS), Canberra, 2005; Stanley, J and Banks, M, *Transport Needs Analysis for Getting There and Back: Report for Transport Connections: Shire of Moyne and Corangamite*, Monash Sustainability Institute, Melbourne, 2012; Victorian Auditor-General, *Victorian Auditor-General's Report: Access to Education for Rural Students*, Melbourne, 2014.

Johanna Wyn, Director of the Youth Research Centre at the University of Melbourne, asserted that this issue in relation to young people has been under the microscope for a long time:

... the adequacy of transport for young people in rural and regional areas of Victoria is an old problem and it is the same old problem. We have known about this for a long time...I am the director of a research centre [on youth] that has been going for over 25 years, so we have been researching these topics again and again in Victoria and outside Victoria too, and we come up with the same result every time.⁴²

A number of transport experts, and importantly, many parents and young people, gave examples to the Committee of the daily challenges faced by people in areas with little or no public transportation.⁴³ Bernie Squire, the Manager of the Wodonga Chamber of Commerce, referred to survey feedback from a Chamber member living in a nearby regional town, whose child spends an hour and a half, with multiple changes of service, to get from home to school and work.⁴⁴ Similarly, Elise Hem described her daughter's difficulties in meeting her full-time TAFE requirements relying on limited public transport:

Here, there is only one train in the morning which leaves at 7.10 am and doesn't return until 6.39 pm. This creates a very long day for teenagers hoping to get an education and they become tired very easily. There are no other alternatives to this train and travelling to Bendigo via public transport is even worse during school hours. The impacts of this alone is increased fatigue, lowered mental alertness, irritability and lowered learning outcomes all affected by public transport travelling times and it still cost her over \$60 a fortnight for travel fees...Sometimes they would finish early or start late and it would result in her having to be in Ballarat alone for sometimes up to 5 hours...⁴⁵

Wendy Young described the impact of the lack of transport options on young people in her community:

... there is no public transport whatsoever — to get them to work or school. As working parents, we cannot always afford the time or money to travel the hundreds of extra kilometres a week to get them there. But do you know what? In the country this is what we have to do for our kids. But there are many families who cannot travel because it is financially and time draining for them because of our own work. So many teens miss out on what they could be achieving for their futures.⁴⁶

⁴² Professor Johanna Wyn, Director, Youth Research Centre, University of Melbourne, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 August 2016, p. 29.

⁴³ Dr Alexa Delbosc, Institute of Transport Studies, Monash University, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 August 2016, p. 62; Amanda Groux, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 September 2016, p. 132; Jacob Heard, Student, Ballarat and Queens Anglican Grammar School, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 September 2016, p. 171; Professor Johanna Wyn, Director, Youth Research Centre, University of Melbourne, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 August 2016, p. 29; Professor Judith Bessant, School of Global, Urban and Social Studies, RMIT University, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 August 2016, p. 53; Meg Brennan, Student, Ballarat and Queens Anglican Grammar School, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 September 2016, p. 171; Wendy Young, *Transcript of evidence*, 8 September 2016, p. 189.

⁴⁴ Bernie Squire, Manager, Wodonga Chamber of Commerce, *Transcript of evidence*, 4 October 2016, p. 217.

⁴⁵ Elise Hem, *Submission*, no. 11, 9 April 2016, p. 1.

⁴⁶ Wendy Young, *Transcript of evidence*, 8 September 2016, p. 188.

Many young people also shared their own experiences of inconvenient transport options in their area and the effect on their daily lives, including Jacob Heard, Meg Brennan and Leah Purtell:

- ... I live in Meredith, so half an hour's drive out of Ballarat, and I spend 3 hours up and back on the school bus each day. It is a half hour trip from Meredith to Ballarat; it takes an hour and a half on the bus each way. That restricts me [in] what I can do out of school, especially as I get into the...more senior years.⁴⁷
- Next year it is looking like I cannot do soccer or netball due to study, transportation and just the time limit, because getting to Sebastopol, which is where I play soccer and netball, the buses are not as regular as I would like them to be, so I would have to be getting there an hour early, and hanging around in Sebastopol, where I do not really know anyone, for an hour is not looking like my safest option.⁴⁸
- I have a part-time job that I do about two or three nights a week. Sometimes Mum and Dad cannot get home and they cannot take me. Getting public transport there is not the easiest thing to do. It takes multiple buses, and especially when I knock off at 9 o'clock I do not necessarily feel safe catching the bus home, especially by myself...⁴⁹

The Committee is also aware that limited capacity to fully engage with employment, education and social opportunities and other services can raise broader psychological and social isolation concerns. James Purcell MLC, the Member for the Western Victoria Region, gave evidence to the Committee that emphasised the far-reaching impact of social mobility:

If you cannot get your youth involved in some of the activities in the community because they are stuck out on farms, they become very isolated and spend all their life looking at iPads or whatever. It is not the best environment in which to be able to encourage them to be part of society. I am not saying that they are completely linked, but all of these issues do add to the opportunity to have suicide rates like we do [at 3.5 times the State average].⁵⁰

Similarly, the Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) emphasised in its submission:

Rural communities thrive when people are engaged and able to contribute. The ability of youth to participate in sport; leisure activities, community groups, and training all relies on their capacity to access them. With public transport services not available, transport by car is often the only option. If car transport arrangements cannot be made, the youth must simply forgo the opportunity.⁵¹

These concerns are discussed in more detail below.

⁴⁷ Jacob Heard, Student, Ballarat and Queens Anglican Grammar School, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 September 2016, p. 171.

⁴⁸ Meg Brennan, Student, Ballarat and Queens Anglican Grammar School, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 September 2016, p. 171.

⁴⁹ Leah Purtell, Student, Ballarat and Queens Anglican Grammar School, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 September 2016, p. 172.

⁵⁰ James Purcell MLC, Member for Western Victoria, Parliament of Victoria, *Transcript of evidence*, 8 September 2016, p. 184.

⁵¹ Victorian Farmers Federation, *Submission*, no. 64, 24 May 2016, pp. 2–3.

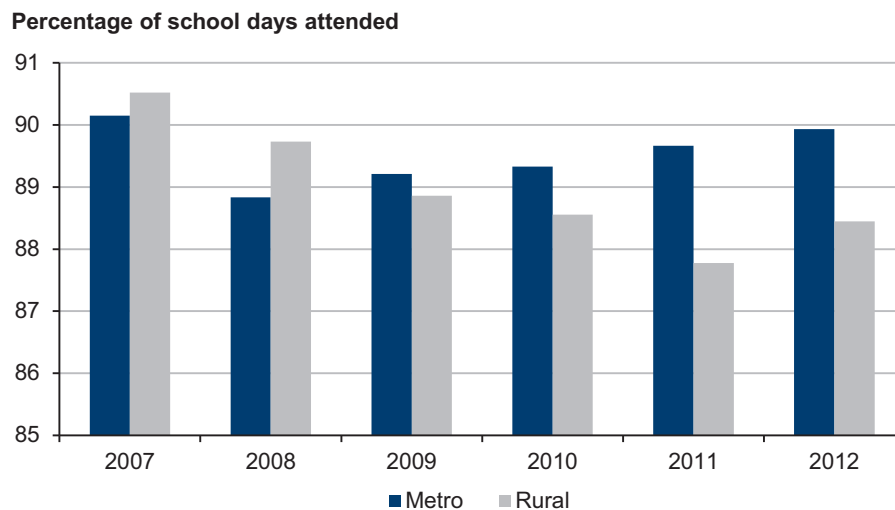
2.3 Broader context of disadvantage for young people in non-urban areas

As part of its investigations, the Committee explored the broader evidence regarding the experiences of young people in rural and regional areas in relation to the key areas of education, employment and training. The Committee was also interested in determining the role of transport mobility in these experiences and the extent that this is relevant to Victoria as a more densely-populated and less remote part of Australia.

2.3.1 Education

In 2014, the Victorian Auditor-General's Office (VAGO) released its report *Access to Education for Rural Students*, which assessed the former Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's activities to provide young Victorians in rural areas with access to a high-quality education. The Audit identified that there is a 'persistent gap in achievement and outcomes between rural and metropolitan students'.⁵² As demonstrated in Figures 2.2 and 2.3, it was reported that although the gaps between rural and metropolitan students are not always large ones, they have 'changed little over time and show no signs of improving'.⁵³ The VAGO Audit also identified the key barriers to rural students' participation in education as educational aspirations, quality of education, financial stresses and proximity to educational institutions.⁵⁴

Figure 2.2 School attendance in years 7 – 10—Victorian Government schools⁵⁵



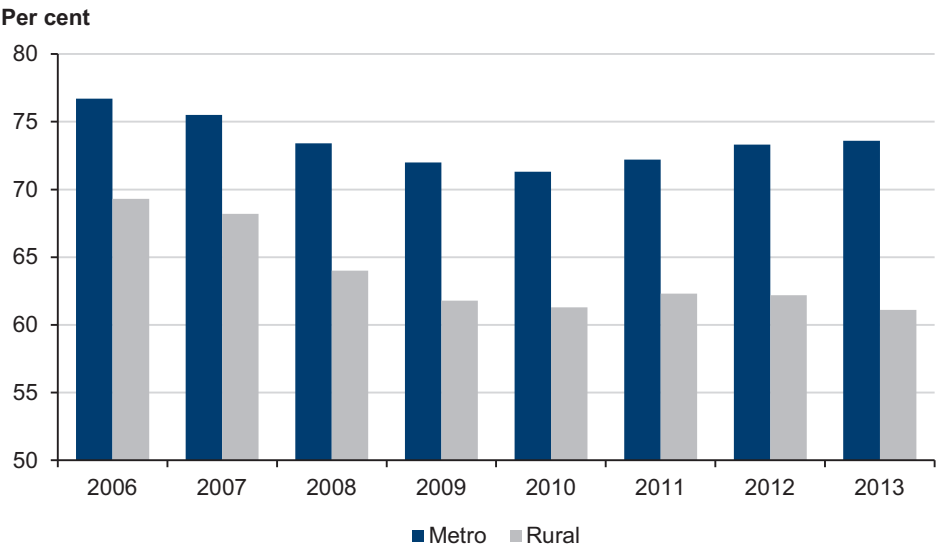
⁵² Victorian Auditor-General, *Victorian Auditor-General's Report: Access to Education for Rural Students*, Melbourne, 2014, p. iii.

⁵³ Victorian Auditor-General, *Victorian Auditor-General's Report: Access to Education for Rural Students*, Melbourne, 2014, p. x.

⁵⁴ Victorian Auditor-General, *Victorian Auditor-General's Report: Access to Education for Rural Students*, Melbourne, 2014, p. 23.

⁵⁵ Victorian Auditor-General, *Victorian Auditor-General's Report: Access to Education for Rural Students*, Melbourne, 2014, p. 13.

Figure 2.3 Government senior secondary completion rates—for 19 year-olds⁵⁶



The Committee notes the clear relationship between location and educational outcomes in Australia. The Mitchell Institute for Health and Education Policy (Mitchell Institute) publication *Young people in rural and remote communities frequently missing out* outlines key findings to support a push for greater access to education services for those in rural and remote locations.⁵⁷

Rural and regional students, when compared to metropolitan students, were found not only to be less likely to complete secondary school than their urban peers,⁵⁸ but also to:

- have reduced access to education services
- attend school less frequently
- be less likely to go to university and
- more likely to drop out of university if they do enrol.⁵⁹

Completion of year 12 or equivalent, measured at age 19, fell at 78 per cent of the cohort in major cities, followed by 64 per cent in inner regional areas, 62 per cent in outer regional areas, 56 per cent in remote areas and just 43 per cent in very remote areas.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Victorian Auditor-General, *Victorian Auditor-General's Report: Access to Education for Rural Students*, Melbourne, 2014, p. 14.

⁵⁷ It is important to note that the Mitchell Institute research deals with access to education Australia-wide.

⁵⁸ Cuervo, H and Wyn, J, *Young People Making it Work: Continuity and change in rural places*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 2012, p. 56; Victorian Auditor-General, *Victorian Auditor-General's Report: Access to Education for Rural Students*, Melbourne, 2014, pp. 13-14.

⁵⁹ Centre for International Research on Education Systems, *Educational Opportunity in Australia 2015: Fact Sheet 6: Young people in rural and remote communities frequently missing out*, Mitchell Institute for Health and Education Policy, Melbourne, 2015.

⁶⁰ Noting that this research looks at attainment Australia-wide.

Further, the Mitchell Institute also found that ‘students living further from cities are less likely to catch up once they are off track at a [educational] milestone’. It also drew attention to the strong links between educational attainment and the development of skills and knowledge, and the resultant impact on future employment opportunities.⁶¹

The Committee also heard from the VFF:

The distance to education institutions and training services is often significant for rural youth. Even accessing online educational tools is very challenging in rural areas that have limited internet and data services. For some these hurdles result in a lack of participation; for others, participation requires them to relocate to metropolitan or regional centres, driving youth away from rural communities.⁶²

2.3.2 Employment

Young people also contend with barriers to obtaining and retaining employment, both part-time and full-time. Collating data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), in March 2016, the BSL explained in its submission that young people aged 15 to 24 continue to be at higher risk of unemployment than other age groups:

In January 2016, the youth unemployment rate was more than twice the overall unemployment rate (5.8 per cent) and more than 2.5 times the rate among adults aged 25 and older (4.6 per cent).⁶³

Despite recent overall improvement in youth unemployment nation-wide, particular ‘hot-spots’ of worsening youth unemployment have been identified, which include some outer-suburban and regional areas of Victoria.⁶⁴ As the YACVic notes, ‘young people’s vulnerability to unemployment (and underemployment) varies considerably according to where they live’.⁶⁵

An April 2015 analysis by the Victoria Council on Social Services contrasted the rising Victorian unemployment rate (then 6.1 percent, now 6.0 per cent)⁶⁶ with the youth unemployment rate in Victorian regions. It found a stark contrast, particularly in Bendigo, Geelong, Warrnambool, Shepparton and in Melbourne’s north, west and south-east, where youth unemployment rates ranged from 17.1 per cent to 18.8 per cent.⁶⁷ However, the Committee also notes unemployment figures for March 2016, as compiled by the BSL and referred to in the RACV submission, which identified the five worst performing areas of

⁶¹ Centre for International Research on Education Systems, *Educational Opportunity in Australia 2015: Fact Sheet 4: Senior school years: school completion uneven across Australia*, Mitchell Institute for Health and Education Policy, Melbourne, 2015.

⁶² Victorian Farmers Federation, *Submission*, no. 64, 24 May 2016, p. 3.

⁶³ Brotherhood of St Laurence, *Australia’s Youth Unemployment Hotspots: Snapshot*, Fitzroy, 2016, p. 2.

⁶⁴ Although the two areas with the highest youth unemployment rates were metropolitan: Melbourne West and Geelong.

⁶⁵ Youth Affairs Council Victoria, *Submission*, no. 76, 27 May 2016, p. 14.

⁶⁶ Department of Employment, ‘Unemployment Rate Time Series: Victoria’, viewed 25 January 2017, <lmip.gov.au/default.aspx?LMIP/LFR_SAFOUR/VIC_LFR_LM_UnemploymentRateTimeSeries>.

⁶⁷ Victorian Council of Social Service, ‘VCSS Snapshot: Youth Unemployment in Victoria and Melbourne’s North’, viewed 25 January 2017, <vcoss.org.au/blog/vcoss-snapshot-youth-unemployment-in-victoria-and-northern-metro/>.

youth unemployment in Victoria as West Melbourne (17.3 per cent), Geelong (16.9 per cent), Hume (16.0 per cent), North East Melbourne (15.7 per cent), and Ballarat (15.5 per cent). These figures show that some areas of Melbourne have similar, and in some cases worse, youth unemployment rates than regional areas.⁶⁸

Interestingly, the Committee also heard about the comparative importance of Vocational Education and Training (VET) as an employment pathway for young people in rural and regional areas. The Mitchell Institute noted that, Australia-wide, ‘...nearly one third of remote and outer regional students undertake an apprenticeship or traineeship’.⁶⁹ David Howes, Assistant Deputy Secretary – Schools at the Victorian Department of Education and Training, provided the Committee with the relevant figures: of the 4403 17 year-olds currently undertaking apprenticeships or traineeships in Victoria, 1856 of those were in regional areas.⁷⁰

The Committee heard evidence from Ivan Neville, the Manager of the Labour Market Research and Analysis Branch of the Federal Department of Employment. Mr Neville acknowledged that, in terms of general employment participation, Melbourne ‘has performed much more strongly than regional Victoria’ and that ‘the participation rate in Melbourne is much, much higher than across the rest of the state’.⁷¹ Mr Neville also noted that unemployment varies across and within regions.⁷²

Mr Neville noted that ‘a large number of factors can impact on the employment prospects of young people, regardless of where they are located’, listing these factors as including ‘educational attainment, skill level, employer requirements, the region’s industry base or the type of work on offer, transport networks and infrastructure, population growth, the degree of natural amenity in the region and access to larger and more dynamic labour markets’.⁷³ Mr Neville also noted that transport is ‘... always a significant issue in terms of the impact, positive or negative, that it can have on someone’s ability to get a job’.⁷⁴

The Committee agrees that access to transport, while certainly not the only barrier to employment for young people, is a significant factor.

FINDING 1: Young people in non-urban areas may be at greater risk of disadvantage than those in metropolitan areas due to a number of factors, including issues of accessibility.

⁶⁸ Royal Automobile Club of Victoria Ltd, *Submission*, no. 40, 18 May 2016, p. 3.

⁶⁹ Centre for International Research on Education Systems, *Educational Opportunity in Australia 2015: Fact Sheet 6: Young people in rural and remote communities frequently missing out*, Mitchell Institute for Health and Education Policy, Melbourne, 2015.

⁷⁰ David Howes, Acting Assistant Deputy Secretary, Department of Education and Training, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 August 2016, p. 81.

⁷¹ Ivan Neville, Branch Manager, Labour Market and Research Analysis, Department of Employment, *Transcript of evidence*, 4 October 2016, p. 255.

⁷² Ivan Neville, Branch Manager, Labour Market and Research Analysis, Department of Employment, *Transcript of evidence*, 4 October 2016, p. 255.

⁷³ Ivan Neville, Branch Manager, Labour Market and Research Analysis, Department of Employment, *Transcript of evidence*, 4 October 2016, p. 255.

⁷⁴ Ivan Neville, Branch Manager, Labour Market and Research Analysis, Department of Employment, *Transcript of evidence*, 4 October 2016, p. 257.

2.3.3 Lack of evidence of link between earlier licensure and employment rates

Despite the above evidence of poorer general outcomes, many stakeholders re-iterated to the Committee that there is little evidence that changing the minimum driving age—allowing 17 year-olds to drive independently—would have a significant, macro-level positive impact on Victorian young people, particularly in relation to youth unemployment.⁷⁵ That is, statistically, 17 year-old Victorians have similar or better employment rates than 17 year-olds in jurisdictions that allow earlier licensure:

...You might think 17-year-olds in Victoria have higher unemployment than 18-year-olds, because they cannot drive. That is not actually the case. Eighteen-year-olds have a higher unemployment rate in Victoria, and compared to other 17-year-olds in Australia, the unemployment rate for 17-year-olds in Victoria is, if anything, one of the lower unemployment rates — similar to WA, a little bit higher than the ACT — but the employment rate for 17-year-olds in Victoria is actually lower than in New South Wales, the Northern Territory, Queensland and Tasmania, all places where they can get a licence by the time they are 17.⁷⁶

For the purposes of this inquiry, Dr Delbosc and Michael Byrne from Monash ITS conducted research to assess whether Victoria's higher licensing age was economically disadvantaging 17 year-olds. Analysing 2011 ABS Census data and using regression modelling to take into account a number of variables which can influence unemployment rates, they proposed and tested the following three hypotheses:⁷⁷

- Victorian 17 year-olds (who are unable to drive independently) will have a higher unemployment rate than Victorian 18 year-olds (who are able to drive independently).
- Victorian 17 year-olds will have higher unemployment rates than 17 year-olds in the remainder of Australia (where the minimum licensing age is 16.5 or 17).
- Given that the impact of licensing age is likely to be seen more in regional areas, Victorian 17 year-olds in regional locations will have higher unemployment rates than 17 year-olds in the remainder of Australia (where the minimum licensing age is 16.5 or 17).⁷⁸

Their study found that none of these three hypotheses were supported. Instead, they found that the 17 year-old unemployment rate in Victoria is not higher overall than in other states; that 17 year-old Victorians do not have higher

⁷⁵ For example, Brian Negus, General Manager Public Policy, Royal Automobile Club of Victoria, *Transcript of evidence*, 15 June 2016, p. 18; Assistant Commissioner Doug Fryer, Road Policing, Victoria Police, *Transcript of evidence*, 25 August 2016, pp. 95-96; John Merritt, Chief Executive, VicRoads, *Transcript of evidence*, 15 June 2016, p. 4.

⁷⁶ Dr Alexa Delbosc, Institute of Transport Studies, Monash University, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 August 2016, p. 63.

⁷⁷ Dr Alexa Delbosc, Institute of Transport Studies, Monash University, Presentation to Committee: 'The impacts of minimum licensing age on youth unemployment rates', 24 August 2016, p. 5.

⁷⁸ Dr Alexa Delbosc, Institute of Transport Studies, Monash University, Presentation to Committee: 'The impacts of minimum licensing age on youth unemployment rates', 24 August 2016, p. 5.

employment rates than 18 year-old Victorians; and that Victorian regional 17 year-olds do not have a higher unemployment rate than 17 year-olds in comparable regional areas Australia-wide:

There is no evidence at the aggregate level that a higher minimum driver licensing age is economically disadvantaging Victorian 17-year-olds, even in regional areas of Victoria.⁷⁹

It is also interesting to note that the youth unemployment rate in New South Wales (NSW), which has a probationary licencing age of 17, shows that the unemployment rate in some regional areas are close to or above 20 per cent, while the NSW's overall youth unemployment rate sits at 12.2 per cent. This suggests that youth unemployment is an issue in states with a lower probationary driving age. Regardless of these figures, it is unclear to what extent unemployment rates are influenced by a probationary licencing age of 18 years rather than 17 years, as youth unemployment is defined as all unemployed persons aged 15 to 24 years.⁸⁰ Similarly, Ivan Neville, of the Department of Employment, explained that:

It is really difficult for us to make other than a rudimentary analysis of the impact of licence age on employment. There is no evidence from the scanned information that we have that a higher minimum age is having a detrimental impact on the employment prospects of young Victorians.⁸¹

The Committee also received evidence indicating that in Victoria there is a trend for apprentices to commence at an older age. In 2015, 15 per cent of new apprentices were aged less than 18 years, which declined from 34 per cent in 1995. As the TAC stated in its submission:

According to the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA), the observed results are due to a trend for young people to complete a year 12 or equivalent before commencing an apprenticeship and because of other factors such as incentives for those in their 20's or 30's to take up an apprenticeship. These apprenticeship age data are consistent with trends at a national level which similarly show increasing apprenticeship commencement ages over time (Hargreaves & Blomberg, 2015).⁸²

In addition, findings from the Victorian Destination of School Leavers Survey indicates that for young people who leave school before completing year 12, the unemployment rate tends to be higher for early school leavers in metropolitan areas (17.3 per cent) compared to early school leavers in rural areas (13.3 per cent).

FINDING 2: There is no macro-level evidence to support a link between early licensure and higher levels of employment.

⁷⁹ Dr Sharon Newnam, et al., *Submission*, no. 86, 30 May 2016, p. 21.

⁸⁰ Vandenbroek, P, 'Youth unemployment statistics: a quick guide', *Parliamentary Library: Research Paper Series, 2015-16*, Commonwealth of Australia, 2015, viewed 27 February 2017, <parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/library/prspub/2880450/upload_binary/2880450.pdf;fileType=application/pdf>.

⁸¹ Ivan Neville, Branch Manager, Labour Market and Research Analysis, Department of Employment, *Transcript of evidence*, 4 October 2016, p. 256.

⁸² Transport Accident Commission, *Submission*, no. 79, 27 May 2016, pp. 30-31.

2.4 Potential effects of earlier licensing

Although there is no macro-level evidence of a link between earlier licensing and higher employment levels, the Committee heard from many stakeholders about the potential benefits of earlier licensing. Based on the evidence received from stakeholders regarding transport barriers limiting young people's access to opportunities, a key area of exploration for the Committee was the potential role of a lowered probationary driving age in minimising these barriers.

Many stakeholders were strongly of the view that earlier licensing would alleviate these pressures for young people. Professor Wyn from the Youth Research Centre at the University of Melbourne advised:

Any barrier to accessing education or training will tip a young person closer to unemployment. Also, lack of mobility makes it less likely that they will get that little bit of experience they need — that they will be able to move. Often they are doing two jobs. The regular transport arrangements do not necessarily work, and as the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria submission shows, youth unemployment is highest in the areas that are the most car-dependent, so we see a relationship there between putting people in a situation where they need a car and youth unemployment. They cannot get there; they just cannot get there.⁸³

Similarly, Tony Robinson from the BSL characterised licensing as '... the gateway to mobility in the areas of high car dependency', and shared Professor Wyn's view that 'delaying licence attainment brings with it the possibility that people will miss out on employment and higher training opportunities'.⁸⁴

2.4.1 Missed and under-utilised employment opportunities

Various witnesses informed the Committee of missed and under-utilised employment and educational opportunities due to an inability to gain independent licensure, particularly in rural and regional areas.⁸⁵ A key concern raised was that young people of non-driving age were restricted to apply for jobs only in their local area, which would be particularly difficult in small towns with few job opportunities suitable to young people⁸⁶ or in areas of high unemployment.⁸⁷

Nicole Bradley concisely explained in her submission the potential knock-on effects of having this problem in her hometown of Seymour in Northern Victoria:

⁸³ Professor Johanna Wyn, Director, Youth Research Centre, University of Melbourne, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 August 2016, p. 30.

⁸⁴ Tony Robinson, Senior Manager, Financial Inclusion, Brotherhood of St Laurence, *Transcript of evidence*, 25 August 2016, p. 100.

⁸⁵ Amanda Groux, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 September 2016; Claire Rasmussen, Director, VET Practice, FedUni TAFE, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 September 2016; Craig Carpenter, Teacher, East Doncaster Secondary College, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 August 2016; Nick Young, *Transcript of evidence*, 8 September 2016; Sam Trethewey, Chair, Young Agribusiness Professionals, Victorian Farmers Federation, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 September 2016; Wendy Young, *Transcript of evidence*, 8 September 2016.

⁸⁶ Darren Murphy, *Transcript of evidence*, 4 October 2016, p. 224.

⁸⁷ Ivan Neville, Branch Manager, Labour Market and Research Analysis, Department of Employment, *Transcript of evidence*, 4 October 2016, p. 258.

I currently work a part-time job in Seymour but am limited to one day a week ... If I had the ability to drive by myself I would have greater opportunities for work in towns around me...Without a probationary licence I will not have access to ... employment outside of Seymour because both my parents work full-time and public transport is difficult and [I] feel it can be risky, especially if I have a night shift. Without a probationary licence ... I will not be able to earn/save money to go to university. I am fearful that this lack of opportunity will limit my ability to gain the skills to get a full-time job. Therefore, I will be trapped in Seymour with no skills or employment opportunities. With a probationary licence, I will be able to drive myself to work and won't have to worry about disrupting my parents' employment.⁸⁸

As noted above, apprenticeships and traineeships are a significant pathway for many young rural and regional people. The Committee heard about a number of young people who preferred to take up these alternative options, and were ready to leave school after year 10 to pursue these opportunities.⁸⁹ Wendy Young explained that 'so many teens ... do not fit into secondary school ... and do not wish to gain a university degree, so they need to leave school to do apprenticeships, work or TAFE schooling'.⁹⁰ The Committee heard that their employment prospects were severely limited without their own transport.

Some of the young people who gave evidence said that they would have left school earlier if apprenticeship opportunities were more easily accessible.⁹¹ Amanda Groux gave an example of a friend's son, who has been unable to pursue his apprenticeship due to transport issues: '[h]e wants to be an electrician and cannot. Because he does not have a licence, they will not even look at him. He will not get a job. He will not be an electrician'.⁹²

Jake Beer, of Wodonga Secondary College, described himself as 'stuck at school doing the same thing', explaining that he wanted to 'go out and get an apprenticeship and learn a trade':

I have done work experience in forestry and carpentry, and they all said, 'We would love to hire you, but you need your licence'. So I would like to go into an apprenticeship when I am eligible for my licence — so as soon as I can — and then start earning money and getting on with life.⁹³

Wendy Young explained the opportunity that her son was unable to take up after his successes in year 10 work experience:

⁸⁸ Nicole Bradley, *Submission*, no. 19, 19 April 2016.

⁸⁹ Amanda Groux, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 September 2016; Cael Green, *Submission*, no. 72, 26 May 2016; Jack Beer, Student, Wodonga Senior Secondary College, *Transcript of evidence*, 4 October 2016; Lucia Finnigan, *Submission*, no. 82, 30 May 2016; Max Meyer, *Submission*, no. 71, 25 May 2016; Nick Young, *Submission*, no. 39, 16 May 2016; Thomas Pascoe, Student, Wodonga Senior Secondary College, *Transcript of evidence*, 4 October 2016; Wendy Young, *Transcript of evidence*, 8 September 2016.

⁹⁰ Wendy Young, *Transcript of evidence*, 8 September 2016, p. 188.

⁹¹ Jack Beer, Student, Wodonga Senior Secondary College, *Transcript of evidence*, 4 October 2016; Nick Young, *Submission*, no. 39, 16 May 2016; Thomas Pascoe, Student, Wodonga Senior Secondary College, *Transcript of evidence*, 4 October 2016.

⁹² Amanda Groux, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 September 2016, p. 133.

⁹³ Jack Beer, Student, Wodonga Senior Secondary College, *Transcript of evidence*, 4 October 2016, p. 237.

If given the opportunity to get himself to and from work, he would be able to become a full-time apprentice, to thrive and grow his incredible appetite for knowledge in his chosen career.⁹⁴

2.4.2 Effect on employability and job retention

The Committee heard that young people were limited in the *types* of employment they could obtain without a licence. Anecdotally, the Committee heard that many employers prefer to employ people who can drive independently.⁹⁵ Sharing her unique perspective as both a parent of young people and a business-owner who employs young people, Amanda Groux highlighted the limitations on employment opportunities, telling the Committee that she and her husband ‘... cannot employ a mechanic without a licence’.⁹⁶

The VFF explained that many rural employers, otherwise keen to support young people, cannot afford to take on non-drivers. The VFF noted that most farm work for young people involves collecting and dropping things off, and the employer can rarely afford the time and financial cost of picking up and/or dropping off the young employee at home before and after work.⁹⁷

Similarly, Robert Hale, a farmer from the Ballarat Region, explained in his submission his experience of employing younger people:

Over many years of farming we have employed a number of young farmhands and apprentices, and the ability to drive legally on public roads has been necessary for them. Many of the suitable young people we have interviewed for positions with us cannot be employed as they cannot perform the essential basic function of driving on public roads. In situations where there are no suitable alternatives we have only been able to employ them at great inconvenience to all involved.⁹⁸

Mr Hale described the resultant inconveniences as including: pressure on families to drive employees, often early in the morning or late at night, pressure on employers to provide board, inability of employees to perform critical driving-related tasks, and difficulty in accessing work-related training off-site.⁹⁹

As well as difficulties in obtaining suitable work, the Committee also heard about the difficulty for young people to *retain* employment, or to take up further responsibilities offered by their employers without a driver’s licence.¹⁰⁰ Craig Carpenter, a teacher at East Doncaster Secondary College, paraphrased the experience of many of his students:

⁹⁴ Wendy Young, *Transcript of evidence*, 8 September 2016, p. 188.

⁹⁵ Claire Rasmussen, Director, VET Practice, FedUni TAFE, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 September 2016, pp. 150, 151.

⁹⁶ Amanda Groux, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 September 2016, p. 133.

⁹⁷ Sam Trethewey, Chair, Young Agribusiness Professionals, Victorian Farmers Federation, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 September 2016, p. 138.

⁹⁸ Robert Hale, *Submission*, no. 37, 13 May 2016.

⁹⁹ Robert Hale, *Submission*, no. 37, 13 May 2016.

¹⁰⁰ See for example Meg Brennan, Student, Ballarat and Queens Anglican Grammar School, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 September 2016, p. 174.

For them, trying to get an apprenticeship has been such hard work, and for their bosses, they always tell me it is just so hard. The boss says, 'Go to Moorabbin today'. They want to be in the city tomorrow. They have to try to figure out how to meet their boss halfway ... For a lot of the [students] who lose apprenticeships it is because their bosses are sick of trying to pick them up and get them to work and then drop them off at home.¹⁰¹

This experience was echoed by Claire Rasmussen, Director of VET Practice at FedUni TAFE in Ballarat, who agreed that many students who have been offered a job simply cannot take up the opportunity. She also spoke about students or apprentices who are let go 'because they just do not have that flexibility, from their employer's perspective, to be able to get from job to job'.¹⁰²

For some forms of employment, including many trades,¹⁰³ the car is the only appropriate mode of transport. Trades often require specialist equipment, such as tools and specialised vehicles, and cannot be performed without access to a vehicle to transport them. A number of witnesses told the Committee that young apprentices and tradespeople's work is also car-dependent as they have multiple different jobs in different places each day.¹⁰⁴ Being nimble and responsive to employer and customer need is a hallmark of many of these trades, such as plumbing and electrical work, as well as caring professions such as disability support work.¹⁰⁵

2.4.3 Issues in border areas

The VFF advised the Committee that for farms close to borders, it may be more convenient to hire young people from South Australia or NSW, as they can drive earlier,¹⁰⁶ reiterating that it is 'not viable for many farm businesses to employ an apprentice or staff member that is unable to drive independently'.¹⁰⁷ One parent told the Committee about the extra costs his family incurred in having their child live and rent across the border in order to be able to drive independently to his early-morning apprenticeship commitments.¹⁰⁸ There were also reports of families living in the Victorian border of Wodonga who allow their children to 'borrow' the address of friends or family in adjoining Albury, NSW, in order to get their probationary licence a year early. One student told the Committee in evidence that they, despite living in Wodonga, had already received their probationary licence in Albury. The Committee notes the impact of being able

¹⁰¹ Craig Carpenter, Teacher, East Doncaster Secondary College, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 August 2016, p. 77.

¹⁰² Claire Rasmussen, Director, VET Practice, FedUni TAFE, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 September 2016, p. 153.

¹⁰³ The Mitchell Institute notes that, Australia-wide, 'vocational education and training (VET) is an important pathway for regional and remote students ... Nearly one third of remote and outer regional students undertake an apprenticeship or traineeship' Centre for International Research on Education Systems, *Educational Opportunity in Australia 2015: Fact Sheet 6: Young people in rural and remote communities frequently missing out*, Mitchell Institute for Health and Education Policy, Melbourne, 2015.

¹⁰⁴ Amanda Groux, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 September 2016, p. 132; Craig Carpenter, Teacher, East Doncaster Secondary College, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 August 2016, p. 177.

¹⁰⁵ Claire Rasmussen, Director, VET Practice, FedUni TAFE, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 September 2016, pp. 150, 151.

¹⁰⁶ Hannah Lewis, Policy Officer, Young Agribusiness Professionals, Victorian Farmers Federation, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 September 2016, p. 140.

¹⁰⁷ Victorian Farmers Federation, *Submission*, no. 64, 24 May 2016, p. 2.

¹⁰⁸ David Roberts, *Submission*, no. 60, 19 May 2016.

to drive to sporting, work and schooling commitments in these regional areas is significant, and the pressure on parents and guardians to facilitate independent licensure is great.¹⁰⁹

On the other hand, from a safety perspective, Assistant Commissioner Doug Fryer of Victoria Police advised of the significant risks and the fraudulent nature of this cross-border practice, which, in one tragic case, led to the death of a 16 year-old passenger:

The cousin or relative or the uncle across the border knows that that address has been given so the 17-year-old can get licensed there, because that is where the mail is going to go. So there is a piece in here around awareness of community around the risk – really, it is a fraud – of giving an address or allowing your address to be given so a 17-year-old can then get his licence. The ramifications of that are extraordinary, as we saw with the Spencer Botting case. Five weeks after he got it, he had killed his mate. So it is quite extraordinary, and I know that they do not know when they do it, but they are the ramifications of allowing a young kid to use your address either north or west of the border.¹¹⁰

2.4.4 Social mobility and stronger communities

The Committee also received evidence about the role that good transport and earlier licensing could play in enabling and supporting happy and healthy people and viable communities more generally.

A large number of people and organisations told the Committee about the extremely broad range of activities and commitments that Victorian young people are involved in. The importance of inclusion and participation in social, sporting, broader family, volunteer, religious and community commitments was raised in a number of contexts, notably:

- the individual benefits for young people, including to physical health, connectedness and social-cultural development
- the positive mental health outcomes for young people in an important developmental stage of life
- the economic and community-building benefits for rural and regional areas in engaging and retaining young people.

Many stakeholders emphasised the particular importance of the adolescent period as a time to forge connections and also practise independence. During this critical phase of life, both autonomy and social inclusion play an important role in a young person's development. As summarised by the VFF:

Against a backdrop of rising youth mental health issues and unemployment across the State, it is important to recognise how isolation is limiting choice and stimulation in rural Victoria, and contributing to these challenges.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ See the comments from Lauren Elvin, *Submission*, no. 65, 24 May 2016; Michelle House, Director, Education and Vocational Skills, Wodonga Institute of TAFE, *Transcript of evidence*, 4 October 2016, p. 247.

¹¹⁰ Assistant Commissioner Doug Fryer, Road Policing, Victoria Police, *Transcript of evidence*, 25 August 2016, p. 93.

¹¹¹ Victorian Farmers Federation, *Submission*, no. 64, 24 May 2016, pp. 2–3.

Service-providers such as United Way Ballarat were acutely aware of the dual role that their programs play for young people, explaining that ‘...the entire reason we run the program is to assist with [combatting isolation and mental health issues for young people in rural and regional areas]’.¹¹²

The Committee notes that improving links between young people and their cultural and social resources, particularly for those in ‘difficult home situations’,¹¹³ can make a huge difference to their lives. Critically, health and support services, for example for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) young people and those experiencing mental health concerns, can be located very far from regional centres, and further again from rural properties and farms.

FINDING 3: Accessible transport options may make a real difference to the social connectivity and healthy development of young people in rural and regional areas.

The VFF also highlighted the potential impact on communities themselves, explaining that in order to remain economically viable, smaller farms are amalgamating.¹¹⁴ As farms amalgamate, fewer people can stay and work in the regions. As people consequently move away from those rural and regional areas in favour of better-connected and better-resourced urban areas, fewer services are provided for the local community.¹¹⁵ When people leave small towns and communities, they rarely return.¹¹⁶ As such, the stakes are high in ensuring that small communities can retain people, specifically young people, who can later build and contribute to the local community.

2.4.5 Access to extra-curricular commitments

For some young people, extra-curricular pursuits, hobbies and sports are a crucial part of their lives. However, accessing any such commitments requires adequate transport. Nick Young told the Committee that he saw many of his friends dropping out of sport and other commitments because ‘they just cannot get there—[t]heir parents are getting too busy’.¹¹⁷ Mr Young was personally feeling the effects of a lack of transportation options compounding his inability to get a licence at 17 years of age:

...My life is held back right now from not being able to drive. I do not go see my mates. I have dropped off fully socially because all I do is work now – I cannot be asking mum to do all these extra trips.¹¹⁸

¹¹² Geoff Sharp, Chief Executive Officer, United Way Ballarat, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 September 2016, p. 161.

¹¹³ Deon Cameron, L2P Coordinator, Warrnambool City Council, *Transcript of evidence*, 8 September 2016, p. 200.

¹¹⁴ Sam Trethewey, Chair, Young Agribusiness Professionals, Victorian Farmers Federation, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 September 2016, p. 139.

¹¹⁵ See the discussion in the evidence from representatives of the Victorian Farmers Federation: Sam Trethewey, Chair, Young Agribusiness Professionals, Victorian Farmers Federation, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 September 2016, p. 139.

¹¹⁶ Claire Rasmussen, Director, VET Practice, FedUni TAFE, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 September 2016, pp. 153-154.

¹¹⁷ Nick Young, *Transcript of evidence*, 8 September 2016, p. 192.

¹¹⁸ Nick Young, *Transcript of evidence*, 8 September 2016, p. 192.

Meg Brennan, a regional student, asked: ‘Schools advocate to do all these activities...but at the end of the day, if you cannot get yourself to those activities, how are you supposed to do them?’¹¹⁹ The Committee heard numerous other stories of young people missing out:

- We made it to grand final, but I missed the semi and first finals because I could not get there. I have had to rely on teammates and my coach. They are okay with it, but I do not want to have to rely on them forever.¹²⁰
- I had to give up sport because my parents could not take me, and being out of town was a lot of trouble, so that affects it.¹²¹
- I have a lot of pets, and it is really hard for my mum, because they are mine, I own them and I have to constantly get food for them, water for them and vaccinations and all that. My mum has a full-time job and works all week, so it is really difficult for her to go out and get pet food. Also ... I used to run a rabbit rescue, and I would have to take the rabbits places or pick rabbits up. It was really difficult to rely on my mum for that. I wanted it to be an independent thing ... I would love to do it again, but I cannot really do that without a licence.¹²²

2.4.6 Pressure on families and support networks

Clearly, one of the tangible benefits of early licensing may be alleviating the not insignificant burden on family and friends who currently drive young people around, as evidenced by the comments of Thomas Pascoe, Jacob Heard and Ryan Durrant, below:

- I live out in Barnawartha, and if I was to, say, get an apprenticeship in the next couple of months, waking up at 5 in the morning and all that sort of stuff would be too much on my parents, having to rely on them every morning and taking me home every night. They do not need that load, because they have got their own jobs. I just think if you lowered it, it would make life so much easier for the both of us, my parents and myself.¹²³
- Quite a few of my mates said if they had the opportunity to take up a trade, whether it is an apprenticeship, TAFE, that kind of stuff, they would do it ... at the moment they cannot rely on their parents who both work full time to get them to their apprenticeship at 7.30 in the morning and pick them up at 6 o'clock at night.¹²⁴
- Just with jobs, at this age we are trying to get part-time jobs. We are actually trying to earn a living. Your parents have their jobs as well and if they cannot make it, it restricts your hours. If you had your own way of transport, you would not be relying on them so much. You could get there on time and actually find your place.¹²⁵

¹¹⁹ Meg Brennan, Student, Ballarat and Queens Anglican Grammar School, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 September 2016, p. 171.

¹²⁰ Jasmine Moore, Student, Wodonga Senior Secondary College, *Transcript of evidence*, 4 October 2016, p. 240.

¹²¹ Kristy Gibson-Emmins, Student, Wodonga Senior Secondary College, *Transcript of evidence*, 4 October 2016, p. 240.

¹²² Roxanne Quinn, Student, Wodonga Senior Secondary College, *Transcript of evidence*, 4 October 2016, p. 240.

¹²³ Thomas Pascoe, Student, Wodonga Senior Secondary College, *Transcript of evidence*, 4 October 2016, p. 232.

¹²⁴ Jacob Heard, Student, Ballarat and Queens Anglican Grammar School, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 September 2016, p. 174.

¹²⁵ Ryan Durrant, Student, Wodonga Senior Secondary College, *Transcript of evidence*, 4 October 2016, p. 235.

The above views and experiences give examples of the potential impact of earlier licensing on:

- better uptake of employment opportunities
- increased employability and job retention
- equity in border areas
- social mobility and stronger communities
- access to extra-curricular commitments
- decreased pressure on families and support networks.

The Committee is of the view that that the disadvantage experienced by young people who do not have transport options where they live, who have very few employment opportunities in their local area, or those who wish to pursue other opportunities rather than complete their secondary education is highly significant on an individual and local community level.

Improving transport mobility for young people in these circumstances is essential to minimising the accessibility barriers that they experience and providing them with a range of opportunities to develop and succeed.

FINDING 4: For a small group of young people and their families, the ability to drive independently from 17 years would have a significant positive impact.

Road safety outcomes for young people have improved in the last ten years, coinciding with the Victorian Government's commitment to the Safe System approach. Combined with a focus on safer vehicles, safer roads and safer speeds, the Safe System approach has a continued and equal emphasis on safer users.¹²⁶ The key intervention aimed at enhancing the safety of young drivers on the roads is the graduated licensing scheme (GLS). The GLS is at the core of discussions regarding the minimum probationary driving age.

Chapter three addresses Terms of Reference 1(a) and 1(d), which include: reviewing the licence structures in other Australian States, particularly the probationary driving age; and considering relevant international licensing models and the positive and negative impacts of such. This chapter outlines the general characteristics of GLS in Australia, and provides a more detailed overview of the Victorian GLS and outlines some of the literature and reviews which have resulted in suggestions for change and improvements to the various GLS across Australia.

3.1 Development of GLS

The concept of the GLS is widely attributed to American Professor Patricia Waller,¹²⁷ who in 1975, proposed a simple, graduated program with progressive lifting of restrictions for learner and newly-licensed drivers.¹²⁸ Varying forms of GLS were subsequently introduced in the United States (~1977), Canada and New Zealand (1987). In Australia, graduated licensing was endorsed at a federal level in 1980, and individual schemes have since been introduced and progressively enhanced by each state and territory government.

Graduated licensing schemes are designed to create a structured practical learning environment in the early years of driving. Characterised by extended learning periods under full supervision and with minimal exposure to risk, they aim to ensure learner drivers are slowly introduced to more complex driving tasks as they become more experienced.

As summarised in the Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety—Queensland (CARRS-Q) submission, the road safety benefits of a GLS are many:

...young drivers enter the independent driving phase at an older age and so their cognitive development, particularly executive brain function, which is important in decisions relevant to driving behaviour ... is at a more advanced stage; learner drivers have had the opportunity to gain more driving experience in a wider variety of

¹²⁶ The Safe System approach is discussed in more detail in chapter four.

¹²⁷ Then of the Highway Safety Research Center, University of North Carolina.

¹²⁸ See historical context in the 1986 Report of the Federal Office of Road Safety: Neilson Associates Pty Ltd, *Implementation of Graduated Licensing for Young Drivers*, Federal Office of Road Safety, Canberra, 1986..

situations while under supervision and in less risky conditions, which reduces crash risk ... the passage of time allows for young people to develop emotional maturity and thus be less susceptible to factors that affect intentional risk taking behaviours, such as peer influence, overconfidence, poor risk perception, or tolerance of breaking the road rules...¹²⁹

3.1.1 General GLS features

As driver licensing is regulated by each individual state or territory, a GLS is employed in varying forms in every Australian jurisdiction. Although there are significant differences between each state and territory GLS, each follows a similar structure. In broad terms, all drivers are required to meet strict criteria as they progress through the system, and are subject to significant restrictions on their driving behaviour. Most GLS comprise three distinct stages:

- a learner period, restricted to supervised driving only
- a probationary period, sometimes split into two stages, allowing unsupervised driving but with multiple restrictions and often higher penalties for infringements
- full or ‘unrestricted’ licensing, sometimes with additional restrictions for drivers under a certain age.

Moving between phases of a GLS, such as from the learner period to the probationary period, requires passing a written or practical test of a particular skill-set. Other general components are described in Table 3.1, many of which are represented in each of the jurisdictions’ licensing systems.

Table 3.1 List of common GLS components

Minimum learner age	The age at which someone may apply for the learner’s permit; ranges from 15 years 9 months to 16 years.
Minimum learner period	The period for which the learner’s permit must be held before the driver is eligible to progress to the probationary stage. This ranges from 6 months (eg in ACT, NT) and 12 months (eg Vic, NSW). In some jurisdictions, older drivers are exempt from a minimum learner period.
Minimum supervised driving requirements	The minimum number of hours a learner driver must drive under the supervision of a fully-licensed driver; ranges from 0 to 120 hours. May include certain number of hours in particular conditions, for example at night, in the rain or on gravel roads.
Supervisory driver requirements	Requirements placed on the supervising driver, for example, a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) limit, a good driving record.
Formal training or education requirements	Driving or other safety programs required, often administered through schools or training organisations.
Licence tests	Driver knowledge test Eyesight test Hazard perception test (HPT) ^(a) Effective licence tests are those that can ‘discriminate between more and less safe applicants to licence only those demonstrating safe behaviours and abilities’. ^(b)

129 Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety – Queensland (CARRS-Q), *Submission*, no. 78, 27 May 2016, p. 1.

Minimum probationary licensing age	The age at which someone may apply for the probationary licence and drive independently, having met all other requirements; ranges from 16 years 6 months to 18 years.
Night driving restrictions	Restrictions to driving within a specified range of night-time hours.
Passenger restrictions	Restrictions on carrying multiple passengers or those in a certain age group. This restriction is often applied during night-time hours only.
Blood / breath alcohol concentration restrictions (BAC)	Zero BAC requirements for learner and probationary drivers.
Mobile phone restrictions	Restrictions on the use of hand-held, hands-free and messaging uses of mobile phones or other devices when driving.
Vehicle power restrictions	Restrictions on the types of vehicles permitted to be driven by probationary drivers, based on specific criteria, such as power-to-weight ratio and certain model designations.
Stricter penalties for infringements or offences	Penalties greater than those for unrestricted licence holders, as well as a reduced demerit point threshold.

(a) Some jurisdictions (Vic, SA, WA) use this test as a requirement from moving from the L to the P phase; others (NSW, Qld) use it between the P1 and P2 stages. NSW also requires drivers to pass an HPT to move from P2 to a full licence.

(b) Walker, E, *Australian graduated licensing scheme: Policy framework*, Transport for NSW, Chippendale, 2014, p. 4.

While it is beyond the scope of this report to provide a comprehensive analysis of each Australian GLS, much significant evidence-based work has been done in this area. The Committee has drawn on reviews from the individual jurisdictions, as well as broader-scale comparisons conducted for Austroads by various academic centres on behalf of state and territory road authorities.

In order to provide sufficient context for the more detailed discussion of the Victorian GLS and the context in which it operates, summaries of the other Australian jurisdictions' systems are set out below. A summary table provides an overview of the common and distinctive features of each GLS model (Appendix 3).

3.2 The GLS in Victoria

According to VicRoads, the utility of Victoria's GLS is providing a 'developmentally-appropriate framework'¹³⁰ that limits exposure to high-risk driving situations as new drivers' experience and maturity increase. In particular, the GLS aims to:

- prepare learners for solo driving through an extensive supervised learning period
- test learners to ensure they can drive safely in everyday traffic
- protect probationary drivers by keeping them out of higher risk situations
- motivate probationary drivers to drive more safely and within the law.¹³¹

¹³⁰ VicRoads, *Submission*, no. 91, 6 June 2016, p. 7.

¹³¹ VicRoads, *Submission*, no. 91, 6 June 2016, p. 20.

3.2.1 Development

Victoria first introduced the minimum driver licensing age of 18 in 1923. A form of probationary licensing was introduced in 1969, comprising a lower speed limit, compulsory display of P plates and stronger penalties attached to minor road and defect offences for newly-licensed drivers. In 1984, a zero BAC requirement was introduced for all learners and probationary drivers.

The first GLS was introduced in Victoria in 1990 over two stages: the first, in July 1990, implemented longer learner permit periods, learner driver supervision and a road rules test. The second phase, in August 1990, mandated restrictions for probationary drivers, including practical and theory tests and restrictions on appropriate vehicles for probationary drivers.¹³² Requirements to hold a full licence became contingent on being at least 21 years of age, having held a probationary licence continuously for three years ‘without conviction’, and a restriction to one passenger for 12 months after re-licensing following any disqualification. The hazard perception test was implemented in 1994.¹³³

In the early 2000s, despite a well-recognised safe driver-training system, young drivers (aged 16–25 years) continued to be over-represented in road crash data. This prompted a comprehensive community consultation process in 2005, providing broader support for the implementation of a stronger and more comprehensive GLS.¹³⁴

After expert consultation, literature reviews and crash data analysis, the current four-stage GLS was introduced in stages over 2007–2008. It made significant changes and improvements to ‘address key crash risks and behavioural issues ... and encourage young drivers to adopt critical safety behaviours’.

Arguably the most significant change introduced with the new GLS was the requirement for learners to accrue 120 hours of supervised driving experience.¹³⁵ According to the Transport Accident Commission (TAC), a great deal of public education work was done prior to the new requirement’s introduction to reaffirm the safety benefits of accruing so many supervised hours. Consequently, it was well received by the Victorian community at that time, despite being the equal-highest number of mandated hours in Australia.¹³⁶

¹³² Healy, D, et al., *Victoria’s Graduated Licensing System Evaluation Interim Report*, Kew, 2012, p. 1.

¹³³ See the comprehensive timelines of multiple jurisdictions’ GLS development in Haworth, N, *Young Driver Research Program: Evaluation of Australian Graduated Licensing Scheme*, Monash University Accident Research Centre, Clayton, 1994..

¹³⁴ Further details on the consultative process, the economic, social regulatory cost-benefit analysis and more general information about the introduction of the GLS is published in the 2012 Interim Review of the GLS: Healy, D, et al., *Victoria’s Graduated Licensing System Evaluation Interim Report*, Kew, 2012, pp. 5–9.

¹³⁵ Evidence given by Robyn Seymour of VicRoads counted the 120 hours, along with Victoria’s licensing age, as the ‘great strengths’ of the Victorian system’: Robyn Seymour, Director Vehicle and Road Use Policy, VicRoads, *Transcript of evidence*, 15 June 2016, p. 6.

¹³⁶ Elizabeth Waller, Manager, Strategy and Programs, Transport Accident Commission, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 August 2016, p. 47.

Throughout the inquiry, the Committee heard widespread support for this requirement, including from many young people subject to the requirement.¹³⁷ Shania Hallyburton, a secondary school student, shared her experience as a learner driver with the Committee, noting she was ‘all for’ the 120 hour requirement.¹³⁸ However, the Committee also notes the significant commitment that 120 hours of supervised driving represents. The difficulties for some people in accruing these hours is discussed in more detail in chapters two and five.

The Committee also heard from multiple experts and stakeholders that Victoria’s GLS is considered the best in Australia¹³⁹ and among the best systems in the world.¹⁴⁰ Each component (including the minimum driving age) is supported by sound research and evidence,¹⁴¹ and is proving effective in addressing the high crash risk of young and newly-licensed drivers.

3.2.2 Graduated phases

New drivers move through four distinct phases, namely a supervised driving period under a learner’s permit (L), a 12-month probationary licence period (P1), a three year further probationary period (P2) and then a full or ‘unrestricted’ licence.

Learner’s permit—L

In order to attain a learner’s permit, applicants must be over 16 years of age, and pass an eyesight test and a computer-based online knowledge test.

Learner drivers are then required to complete 120 hours of supervised driving in a variety of conditions, including at least ten hours of night driving. The hours and conditions must be logged in the VicRoads Learner Log Book. Learners over the age of 21 are not required to complete the 120 hours.

Basic conditions of the permit require the learner driver to:

- display their L plates at all times
- maintain a BAC of zero at all times
- be supervised by a holder of an unrestricted Australian licence

¹³⁷ Dave Serpell, Individual Youth Advocate, Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, *Transcript of evidence*, 25 August 2016; Jacob Heard, Student, Ballarat and Queens Anglican Grammar School, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 September 2016; Leah Purtell, Student, Ballarat and Queens Anglican Grammar School, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 September 2016; Liam Knight, Student, Wodonga Senior Secondary College, *Transcript of evidence*, 4 October 2016; Meg Brennan, Student, Ballarat and Queens Anglican Grammar School, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 September 2016; Phoebe Cody, Student, Brauer College, *Transcript of evidence*, 8 September 2016; Shania Hallyburton, Student, Brauer College, *Transcript of evidence*, 8 September 2016; Shaquile Singh, Student, Wodonga Senior Secondary College, *Transcript of evidence*, 4 October 2016.

¹³⁸ Shania Hallyburton, Student, Brauer College, *Transcript of evidence*, 8 September 2016, p. 211.

¹³⁹ Brian Negus, General Manager Public Policy, Royal Automobile Club of Victoria, *Transcript of evidence*, 15 June 2016, p. 17; Assistant Commissioner Doug Fryer, Road Policing, Victoria Police, *Transcript of evidence*, 25 August 2016, pp. 88,95; John Merritt, Chief Executive, VicRoads, *Transcript of evidence*, 15 June 2016, pp. 3-4.

¹⁴⁰ See for example: Australasian College of Road Safety, *Submission*, no. 88, 30 May 2016, p. 14; Professor Rebecca Ivers, The George Institute for Global Health, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 October 2016, p. 279.

¹⁴¹ Australasian College of Road Safety, *Submission*, no. 88, 30 May 2016, p. 4.

- not use a mobile phone, including hands-free or messaging of any kind
- not tow any trailers.¹⁴²

Accruing five or more demerit points in 12 months, or 12 or more in three years will result in learner's permit suspension.

The learner's permit must generally be held for a minimum of 12 months before the learner can apply for a probationary licence. This period is shortened to six months for applicants between 21–24 years, and to three months for those over 25. In order to progress to the probationary stage, learners must pass an on-road driving test, as well as an online hazard perception test, and present their signed Learner Log Book as proof of their supervised hours of driving.¹⁴³

Probationary licence—P1

Learner drivers may apply for their probationary licence once they are 18. Drivers under 21 years of age need to complete both stages of probationary licensing, while those over 21 automatically move to the P2 stage.

P1 drivers are subject to strict limitations, requiring them to:

- display white-on-red P-plates at all times
- maintain a BAC of zero at all times
- only drive vehicles under a certain power-to-weight ratio, and not drive certain high-powered 'probationary prohibited vehicles'¹⁴⁴
- not tow a trailer, unless for work or under instruction
- not drive a manual vehicle if they obtained their licence using an automatic car
- not carry more than one 'peer passenger' (passenger aged between 16–21 years old) excluding family members¹⁴⁵
- not use any form of mobile phone, including hands-free devices.¹⁴⁶

Drivers at the P1 stage are subject to stricter rules regarding demerit points. A licence will be suspended if a P1 driver accrues five or more demerit points in a 12 month period, or 12 or more in a three year period.

¹⁴² VicRoads, 'Restrictions on learner drivers', viewed 9 March 2017, <www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/licences/your-ls/restrictions-on-learner-drivers>.

¹⁴³ VicRoads, 'Restrictions on learner drivers', viewed 9 March 2017, <www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/licences/your-ls/restrictions-on-learner-drivers>.

¹⁴⁴ Being a vehicle manufactured on or after 1 January 2010, with a power to mass ratio greater than 130 kilowatts per tonne, or an engine that has been modified to increase the vehicle's performance. VicRoads provide a searchable database of approved vehicles. Exemptions may apply.

¹⁴⁵ This restriction does not apply when the driver is supervised by a fully-licensed driver in the front passenger seat.

¹⁴⁶ VicRoads, 'P1 & P2 probationary licence restrictions', viewed 9 March 2017, <www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/licences/your-ps/p1-and-p2-probationary-licence-restrictions>.

Once a driver has held the P1 licence for 12 months, they progress to the P2 licence automatically, provided they have a good driving record.¹⁴⁷

Probationary licence—P2

P2 licence holders are subject to similar restrictions to P1 drivers, but may tow trailers, and carry more than one peer passenger. They must display green P plates at all times.

Drivers at the P2 stage will also have their licence suspended if they accrue five or more demerit points in a 12 month period, or 12 or more in a three year period.

Once a driver has held the P2 licence for three years, they will progress to a full, unrestricted licence automatically, provided they have a good driving record.

Unrestricted licence

In this final phase, drivers are subject to the normal laws of licensing and of the road. However, some further restrictions apply to younger, fully-licensed drivers, such as any driver under 26 years of age caught drink-driving (with a BAC exceeding 0.05) must have an alcohol interlock fitted to their car for six months following re-licensing.

3.2.3 Exemptions to requirements

There are a number of exemptions that may be granted, to learner or probationary drivers, usually on hardship grounds, to several of the GLS requirements. For example, a driver may be granted an exemption from the peer passenger restrictions if the nature of their 'employment, education or family circumstances would mean that [the restriction] would cause undue hardship'.¹⁴⁸ Other requirements from which drivers may seek exemptions are:

- accrual of 120 hours of supervised driving¹⁴⁹
- holding the learner's permit for a minimum of 12 months¹⁵⁰
- not driving prohibited vehicles.¹⁵¹

There are no exemptions to the minimum probationary age requirement.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁷ A good driving record means that the probationary driver has not had their licence cancelled or suspended, and has not had any drink or drug-driving offences. Having a 'poor driving record' will result in the P1 or P2 period being extended for at least 6 months.

¹⁴⁸ VicRoads, 'Licence exemptions', viewed 20 January 2017, <www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/licences/your-ps/get-your-ps/licence-exemptions>.

¹⁴⁹ This exemption may be granted on hardship grounds, or on the grounds of proven previous driving experience (overseas or interstate).

¹⁵⁰ This exemption may be granted on hardship grounds, or on the grounds of proven previous driving experience (overseas or interstate).

¹⁵¹ Exemptions may be granted to the prohibition on driving certain vehicles (on grounds of either hardship and timing of the categorisation of certain cars). Some exemptions will require specific written permission from VicRoads, while others are automatic, including where a probationary driver is driving a designated work vehicle. In this case, the onus rests with the driver to provide sufficient evidence of their driving status to police, if requested.

¹⁵² Robyn Seymour, Director Vehicle and Road Use Policy, VicRoads, *Transcript of evidence*, 15 June 2016, p. 8.

3.2.4 Reviews of the Victorian GLS

2012 Interim Evaluation of Victorian GLS¹⁵³

An independent interim review of the system was commissioned by VicRoads in 2012 based on both crash data and survey responses from learner and probationary drivers to the new GLS components.¹⁵⁴ Respondents in their first years of licensing under the improved GLS were compared with a control group of fully-licensed drivers aged between 26–38 years.¹⁵⁵

Based on crash data from 2008 to 2010, the review reported a significant reduction in young drivers' crash involvement, notably including:

- a reduction of 23% in the casualty crash involvement of drivers (aged 18-20 when first licensed) in the first year of holding a probationary licence when compared with a control group, equating to a saving of approximately 240 casualty crash involvements per annum.
- a reduction of 31% in the fatal and serious injury crash involvement of drivers (aged 18-20 when first licensed) in the first year of holding a probationary licence when compared with a control group, equating to a saving of approximately 75 involvements per annum.
- a reduction of 16% in the casualty crash involvement of drivers (aged 18-20 when first licensed) in the first 9 months of the second year of holding a probationary licence, equating to a saving of approximately 75 involvements per annum.
- a reduction in the proportion of casualty crash involvements (57%) and fatal and serious injury crash involvements (58%) of target drivers (aged 18-20 years when first licensed) carrying two or more peer passengers in their first year of holding a probationary licence; these percentage reductions equate to approximate savings of 70 and 25 involvements respectively per annum.¹⁵⁶

It also reported that the modified GLS showed positive outcomes in 'self-reported changes in key behaviours and offence rates ... and reductions in casualty crash and serious crash involvement'.¹⁵⁷ It was noted, however, that the 'full impact' of the system could not be adequately measured until a complete cohort of new drivers had passed through the entire system. It recommended areas of focus for a further review, some of which included:

- further analysis of crash involvement once substantial cohort of drivers licensed under the new scheme have completed and graduated to full licence

¹⁵³ Healy, D, et al., *Victoria's Graduated Licensing System Evaluation Interim Report*, Kew, 2012.. See discussion in Walker, E, *Australian graduated licensing scheme: Policy framework*, Transport for NSW, Chippendale, 2014, pp. 36–37..

¹⁵⁴ Healy, D, et al., *Victoria's Graduated Licensing System Evaluation Interim Report*, Kew, 2012, p. 10.

¹⁵⁵ Healy, D, et al., *Victoria's Graduated Licensing System Evaluation Interim Report*, Kew, 2012, pp. 22.

¹⁵⁶ Healy, D, et al., *Victoria's Graduated Licensing System Evaluation Interim Report*, Kew, 2012, p. iii.

¹⁵⁷ Healy, D, et al., *Victoria's Graduated Licensing System Evaluation Interim Report*, Kew, 2012, pp. iii, 31. For interim results of learner driver behaviours post-GLS implementation, see 11–15; for probationary drivers, see 16–20. A detailed discussion of crash trends and the method of their analysis can be found at 21–30.

- accumulation of additional crash data so that the impact of the GLS on fatal crashes can be examined
- impact of the GLS on crashes involving learners and unlicensed novice drivers.¹⁵⁸

A further review was commissioned and was due to report in 2015.

FINDING 5: The Victorian graduated licensing scheme is recognised as the leading system in Australia.

3.3 The GLS in other Australian states and territories

Each Australian jurisdiction's GLS is summarised below, with particular note made of any significant differences between each system and the Victorian GLS. For a specific comparative overview of each individual system's requirements, refer to the detailed table set out at Appendix 3.

3.3.1 Australian Capital Territory (ACT)

The ACT grants learner licences from age 15 and 9 months, the lowest learner age limit in Australia. Drivers obtain their learner licence by completing a road safety course (taught at year 10 level in secondary schools, or in specialised 'Road Ready Centres') and an online knowledge test of road rules.¹⁵⁹

The ACT only has one provisional licence stage,¹⁶⁰ of equivalent length to other jurisdictions' two-tiered stage. At the minimum licensing age of 17, having held their learner licence for at least six months, drivers may choose to either:

- take a practical driving test or
- complete competency-based training and assessment, undertaking a recommended (but not mandatory) 50 hours' supervised driving with set log book assessments, assessed by an accredited driving instructor.

Drivers must hold their provisional (P) licence for three years before graduating to an unrestricted licence.

¹⁵⁸ Healy, D, et al., *Victoria's Graduated Licensing System Evaluation Interim Report*, Kew, 2012, p. iii. Further areas of focus are detailed at 31–34.

¹⁵⁹ ACT Government, 'Getting L's: Licence to drive', viewed 9 March 2017, <www.roadready.act.gov.au/c/roadready?a=sp&pid=1098838412>

¹⁶⁰ In the ACT, the post-learner phase is called 'provisional'—a 'probationary licence' in the ACT is quite different, being the licence issued to someone when they return to driving from a suspension. The provisional licence is bright red, while the probationary licence is blue.

Reviews and future development

In 2013, the ACT Government reviewed its GLS in response to a continued over-representation of newly-licensed drivers in road crash data.¹⁶¹ The review is not yet complete, but the *ACT Road Safety Action Plan 2016–2020* envisages a revised ACT GLS, based on outcomes of community consultations and the final review papers.¹⁶²

As the ACT is geographically contained within NSW, many drivers regularly cross the border, meaning that any discrepancies with NSW licensing conditions are important to ACT drivers. For this reason, there is community support for standardising the GLS in both jurisdictions.¹⁶³

3.3.2 New South Wales (NSW)

In NSW, learners can obtain a learner licence at the age of 16, once they have passed the online Driver Knowledge Test. During the learner stage, drivers under 25 years of age must complete 120 hours of supervised driving, including 20 hours of night driving. These can be accrued in the following ways:

- In recognition of the cost, value and quality of professional driving instruction, one hour of professional instruction is counted as three hours, up to ten professional hours.
- Drivers may also opt to complete a five-hour safer drivers course for 20 hours' credit.¹⁶⁴

At 17 years of age, having held a learner's licence for at least 12 months, drivers may undertake a practical test to obtain their P1 licence. At 18 years of age, having held the P1 licence for two years, drivers may undertake a hazard perception test to move to the P2 stage.

P1 drivers are precluded from carrying more than one peer passenger between the hours of 11 pm to 5 am, in order to lessen distractions.

NSW has an additional step to move to an unrestricted licence, with drivers required to pass a driver qualification test or 'exit test', made up of a hazard perception test and a driving knowledge test.

NSW learners and P1 drivers have a 90km/hr speed limit, and P2 drivers may drive up to 100km/hr.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶¹ ACT Government, *ACT Crash Report*, Justice and Community Safety Directorate, Canberra, 2014, p. 28. Also ACT Government, 'Review of ACT Graduated Licensing Scheme', viewed 22 December 2016, <www.justice.act.gov.au/page/view/3476/title/review-of-act-graduated-licensing>.

¹⁶² ACT Government, *Road Safety Action Plan 2016–2020*, Canberra, 2016.

¹⁶³ See for example Sibthorpe, C, 'What does the NSW P-plate mobile ban mean for ACT P-platers?', *The Canberra Times*, 27 July 2016, viewed 22 December 2016, <www.canberratimes.com.au/act-news/what-does-the-nsw-pplate-mobile-ban-mean-for-act-pplaters-20160727-gqene6.html>.

¹⁶⁴ Roads & Maritime, 'Learner licence', viewed 9 March 2017, <www.rms.nsw.gov.au/roads/licence/driver/learner/>.

¹⁶⁵ Roads & Maritime, 'Provisional P1 licence', viewed 20 January 2017, <www.rms.nsw.gov.au/roads/licence/driver/p1.html>.

P1 exemptions—Remote areas

Based on a two-year pilot scheme commencing in July 2013, learner licence holders residing in remote geographical locations west of the Newell Highway may be eligible for a remote area exemption that allows them to drive on a P1 licence after accruing only 50 hours of practical driving experience (including ten hours at night). They must have held their learner's permit for 12 months and pass a driving test.¹⁶⁶ The restricted licence allows drivers to travel to work, education and medical appointments.¹⁶⁷ After six months of driving on the restricted P1 licence, drivers automatically move onto a normal P1 licence.

The Committee heard that these particular areas are very isolated, and are home to remote Aboriginal communities in which some learner drivers experience difficulty accruing the mandated 120 hours of supervised driving due to limited access to professional driver services, safe vehicles or supervising drivers.

The Committee also heard criticism of this type of supervised hours exemption, based on the fact that drivers living in regional and remote areas already face a 'higher risk of car crash-related serious injury and death' based on their tendency to drive longer distance on poorer-quality roads.¹⁶⁸ That is, the exemptions often apply to those people for whom attaining the full skill-set the GLS is designed to deliver is critical; without those skills there is an 'increase in risk and trauma'. Professor Rebecca Ivers, Director of the Injury Division at the George Institute for Global Health, told the Committee of her concerns about these types of exemptions for people in remote areas:

... I use the example of the Aboriginal population in New South Wales. We have lots of conversations with Transport for New South Wales about whether or not you should make it easier for people who have got barriers to licensing to get their licence. I mean that is just dumbing the system down for at-risk people, which is just crazy.¹⁶⁹

At this stage, the take-up of the scheme has been minimal.¹⁷⁰

3.3.3 Northern Territory (NT)

The NT learner's licence can be obtained at the age of 16 or over, after passing a written test. There is no minimum amount of supervised hours required, although it is recommended that at least 50 hours of driving experience be accrued. Learner drivers may only drive at a maximum of 80km/hr, unless under professional supervision.¹⁷¹ In limited circumstances, learner drivers may tow trailers or other vehicles.

¹⁶⁶ Roads & Maritime, 'Provisional P1 licence', viewed 20 January 2017, <www.rms.nsw.gov.au/roads/licence/driver/p1.html>.

¹⁶⁷ Being the local government areas of Brewarrina, Walgett, Bourke, Broken Hill, Balranald and Hay.

¹⁶⁸ Professor Rebecca Ivers, The George Institute for Global Health, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 October 2016, p. 277.

¹⁶⁹ Professor Rebecca Ivers, The George Institute for Global Health, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 October 2016, p. 282.

¹⁷⁰ See presentation Ma, A, et al., 'Regional Pilot of a Restricted P1 Provisional Licence', Paper presented at the 2013 Australasian College of Road Safety Conference - "A Safe System: The Road Safety Discussion", Australasian College of Road Safety, Adelaide, 2013. and discussion in Associate Professor Teresa Senserrick, Transport and Road Safety (TARS) Research UNSW, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 October 2016, p. 273.

¹⁷¹ Department of Transport NT, *Submission*, no. 80, 27 May 2016.

The NT has the lowest probationary driving age of all Australian jurisdictions, with licensing possible at 16 years 6 months. The Committee heard from the NT Department of Transport about the important benefits of accessing opportunities and services by obtaining an independent licence, especially in remote areas, where public transport and infrastructure are limited.¹⁷²

At this age, drivers who have held their learners licence for six months may take the practical driving test to progress to the one-stage provisional licence (P) period. P drivers are restricted to a speed of 100km/hr, and must hold the P licence for two years (if under 25), or one year (if over 25).¹⁷³

The NT requires those under 25 to maintain a BAC of zero for the first three years of driving post-learner's licence.¹⁷⁴

3.3.4 Queensland

In Queensland, those aged over 16 years may apply for a learner's licence after passing a written road rules test. Those under 25 years of age must hold the licence for a minimum of 12 months, and must complete 100 hours of supervised on-road driving experience, as well as ten hours of night driving, before applying for a P1 licence. Those over 25 are not required to accrue supervised hours. As in NSW, up to a limit of 30 hours, one hour of professional instruction may be logged as three hours.

A P1 licence can be obtained from 17 years of age, and requires passing a practical driving test. Those over 25 years of age who pass the test will move directly to the P2 stage. P1 drivers under 25 may carry only one peer passenger (under 21 years) between 11 pm and 5 am.¹⁷⁵

After holding the P1 licence for 12 months, drivers can move to a P2 licence after completing a hazard perception test (only required for those under 25). P2 licence holders progress to an open licence after holding the licence for two years. P2 licence holders above the age of 25 years may progress to an unrestricted licence after only one year.¹⁷⁶

Exemption to minimum licensing age

Importantly, Queensland is the only jurisdiction that allows people to apply for their provisional driver's licence prior to the mandated minimum age of 17 years. Applicants must meet strict criteria, proving that they meet each of the following criteria:

¹⁷² Department of Transport NT, *Submission*, no. 80, 27 May 2016.

¹⁷³ Department of Transport NT, *Submission*, no. 80, 27 May 2016.

¹⁷⁴ Northern Territory Government, 'Get your driver licence', viewed 9 March 2017, <nt.gov.au/driving/licences/get-your-driver-licence>.

¹⁷⁵ Not including immediate family members. Department of Transport and Main Roads Queensland, *Submission*, no. 38, 16 May 2016.

¹⁷⁶ If the P1 licence was issued at age 23, drivers may move to the P2 stage after only one year.

- They need to drive a motor vehicle: either to/from their place of employment, in the course of their employment, or to/ from their educational institution, or to get medical treatment for themselves or for a family member.
- They have no other transport reasonably available to them.
- That refusal of the application will cause severe hardship to the applicant or their family.

The exemptions are countenanced to provide for a situation where a young person has taken on a 'special responsibility in relation to their family'. Very few exemptions are granted under this scheme: in 2014, one exemption was granted from 72 applications; in 2015 one exemption was granted from 43 applications.¹⁷⁷

Reviews and future developments

In 2007, the Queensland Government made substantial changes to its existing GLS, with an aim to reduce the number of fatalities and injuries resulting from crashes involving young and less-experienced drivers. These changes were evaluated in 2014 by the Monash University Accident Research Centre (MUARC), which reported favourably on the changes:

It was estimated that implementation of the new GLS in Queensland was associated with a 31% reduction in fatal crashes, a 13% reduction in fatal and serious injury crashes combined and a 4% reduction in all reported crashes, all of which were statistically significant.¹⁷⁸

The system was due to be further evaluated by University of NSW Transport and Road Safety Research (UNSW TARS) in 2016.¹⁷⁹

In its submission to the inquiry, the Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads noted that the Government may consider changes to the current system based on the findings of the next review, given that a significantly larger amount of crash and infringement data is now available.¹⁸⁰

3.3.5 South Australia (SA)

Learners in SA can apply for a learner's permit from 16 years of age, and must pass a written or online road rules test. They must hold the learner's permit for at least 12 months (or six months if over 25), and complete 75 hours of supervised driving, including 15 hours of night driving.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁷ Department of Transport and Main Roads Queensland, *Submission*, no. 38, 16 May 2016, p. 3.

¹⁷⁸ Scully, M, et al., *An Evaluation of Queensland's Graduated Licensing System: Analysis of Police-reported Crash Outcomes, and Individual GLS Components*, Monash University Accident Research Centre, Clayton, 2014, p. 130.

¹⁷⁹ As noted by Associate Professor Teresa Senserrick, Transport and Road Safety (TARS) Research UNSW, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 October 2016, p. 274.

¹⁸⁰ Department of Transport and Main Roads Queensland, *Submission*, no. 38, 16 May 2016, p. 2.

¹⁸¹ Government of South Australia, 'Learner's stage', viewed 9 March 2017, <nt.gov.au/driving/licences/get-your-driver-licence>.

A P1 licence can be obtained from 17 years, after passing a practical driving test or competency-based training and assessment and hazard perception test. Unless supervised by a fully-licensed driver, seated in the front passenger seat, P1 drivers under 25 may not:

- drive between midnight and 5am¹⁸² or
- carry more than one peer passenger (between 16 to 20 years).¹⁸³

The P1 stage lasts for a minimum of 12 months, and if demerit point free, drivers aged 18 or over may progress to P2 stage, which lasts for at least two years.

Learner, P1 and P2 drivers are limited to a maximum speed of 100km/hr.¹⁸⁴

Reviews and future developments

The SA GLS commenced in 1989, and has been reviewed and strengthened consistently over the last three decades.¹⁸⁵ In 2011, the Centre for Automotive Safety Research (CASR) was commissioned by the SA Department of Transport, Energy and Infrastructure to prepare a discussion paper on improving road safety outcomes for young people. A key recommendation was raising the licensing age from 17 to 18.¹⁸⁶ Associate Professor Senserrick of UNSW TARS explained to the Committee that despite strong support from stakeholder groups for the suite of changes, the proposal to raise the minimum driving age was not supported by the broader community and was therefore not introduced.¹⁸⁷ All other improvements to the GLS (including passenger restrictions and night driving restrictions) were approved and came into effect in 2014.

¹⁸² A number of exemptions from this night driving restriction are available to young drivers, including driving between home and work or driving in the course of employment; to travel between home and education/training or driving in the course of education/training if enrolled with a school, university TAFE, apprenticeship or other formal training provider; driving between home and formal volunteer work or driving in the course of performing formal volunteer work; and driving between home and an activity to participate in sports, artistic, charitable, religious or scientific activities provided by an organisation, association or club. Drivers need not apply for exemptions, but must satisfy police if requested. See Government of South Australia, 'The New Rules', viewed 20 January 2017, <mylicence.sa.gov.au/gls/the_new_rules#no-more-than-one-passenger-aged-16-20>.

¹⁸³ The carriage of immediate family members is exempt from this rule, as are passengers carried in the course of employment. Importantly, this exemption does not apply to education, training, volunteering, sports or other activities. Drivers need not apply for exemptions, but must satisfy police if requested. See Government of South Australia, 'The New Rules', viewed 20 January 2017, <mylicence.sa.gov.au/gls/the_new_rules#no-more-than-one-passenger-aged-16-20>. Also the exemption form: Government of South Australia, 'P1 Driver Exemption Form: Passenger and Night Driving Restrictions', viewed 20 January 2017, <mylicence.sa.gov.au/___data/assets/pdf_file/0020/133841/P1-driver-exemption-form-passenger-and-night-driving-restrictions.pdf>.

¹⁸⁴ Government of South Australia, 'Learner's stage', viewed 9 March 2017, <nt.gov.au/driving/licences/get-your-driver-licence>.

¹⁸⁵ See Government of South Australia, 'Graduated Licensing Scheme: History', viewed 20 January 2017, <www.mylicence.sa.gov.au/my-car-licence/graduated-licensing-scheme/gls-history>.

¹⁸⁶ Department for Transport, Energy and Infrastructure, *South Australia's Graduated Licensing Scheme: Initiatives to Protect Young Drivers: A Discussion Paper*, Government of South Australia, Adelaide, 2011.

¹⁸⁷ See discussion in Associate Professor Teresa Senserrick, Transport and Road Safety (TARS) Research UNSW, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 October 2016, p. 271. Given the very remote nature of some parts of South Australia, it was decided that there were insufficient services to support the community in transitioning to a higher probationary driving age.

3.3.6 Tasmania

The learner licence in Tasmania may be obtained at 16 years, after completing a driver knowledge test. Although requiring the standard 12-month period overall, Tasmania is one of only two Australian jurisdictions with a two-stage learner period. Learner one (L1) learners must hold the licence for three continuous months, and are advised to log a minimum of 30 hours' driving experience before taking the on-road driving assessment to move to L2. Learner two (L2) drivers are required to log 50 hours of supervised driving experience, and must hold the L2 for a minimum of nine months.¹⁸⁸

Having met the above requirements, at 17 years of age, drivers passing the driving test will progress to a 12 month P1 stage followed by a two year P2 stage.¹⁸⁹ Those without demerit points may then move to an unrestricted licence.

L1 drivers may not exceed 80km/hr, while L2 and P1 drivers are limited to 90km/hr, or 100km/hr in a 110km/hr zone.¹⁹⁰

Reviews and future developments

The current form of Tasmania's GLS follows changes made under the Second Action Plan of the *Tasmanian Road Safety Strategy 2007–2016*.¹⁹¹ In the Third Action Plan, which covers the period 2014–2016, the Tasmanian Government has committed to 'investigate further changes to the GLS' through a policy review, and to investigate GLS elements implemented in other jurisdictions and their possible application into Tasmanian conditions.¹⁹²

3.3.7 Western Australia (WA)

Similar to Tasmania, the WA learner licence phase is split into two phases. Those 16 years or older may obtain a learner licence after passing an online driving theory test and an eye-sight test. After six months, and having accrued at least 25 hours of mandated supervised driving, learners must pass a practical driving assessment to move into the second phase. They must then complete another minimum 25 hours over at least six months before undertaking a hazard perception test to move to the P1 phase. The WA P1 phase is the shortest in Australia at six months' duration, and carries a night-driving restriction.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁸ Tasmanian Government, 'L1 logbook', viewed 9 March 2017, <www.transport.tas.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/108804/312075_LTS_Novice_DriverLogbook_1May16.pdf>

¹⁸⁹ Those over 23 years of age need only hold a P2 licence for one year.

¹⁹⁰ Tasmanian Government, 'L1 logbook', viewed 9 March 2017, <www.transport.tas.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/108804/312075_LTS_Novice_DriverLogbook_1May16.pdf>

¹⁹¹ Tasmanian Government, *Second Action Plan 2011-2013: Our Safety, Our Future: Tasmanian Road Safety Strategy 2007-2016*, Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources, Hobart, 2011.

¹⁹² Tasmanian Government, *Third Action Plan 2014-2016: Our Safety, Our Future: Tasmanian Road Safety Strategy 2007-2016*, Department of State Growth, Hobart, 2014, p. 15.

¹⁹³ WA Department of Transport, 'Learning to drive/ride (overview)', viewed 9 March 2017, <www.transport.wa.gov.au/licensing/learning-to-drive-overview.asp>.

Night-driving restrictions

P1 drivers may not drive between midnight and 5 am unless for the purposes of employment, formal schooling or voluntary work. Rather than issuing exemptions, the onus is on the P1 driver, if pulled over by police, to prove that they meet these conditions. It is recommended that drivers carry a letter from their employer or education provider detailing the hours they are required to be at work or at school.

Drivers must also show that they are travelling the shortest practicable route, and that they have commenced their journey as soon as practicable once their employment or schooling has finished.¹⁹⁴ If the driver fails to prove that their travel is for authorised purposes, they will be deemed not to be complying with their licence conditions, and will be treated as if they are driving unlicensed.¹⁹⁵

3.4 Analysis of the GLS model and components

3.4.1 2015 Austroads Report: analysis of individual GLS components

Austroads is the peak body for Australian and New Zealand road transport and traffic agencies, and ‘aims to be the Australasian leader in providing high quality information, advice and fostering research in the road transport sector’.¹⁹⁶

In 2015, Austroads commissioned an extensive review of the literature and data on the effectiveness of individual components of GLS. Its major focus was considering whether each component addresses a ‘contributing factor to young driver crashes,’¹⁹⁷ that is, assessing their effectiveness as a road safety measure.

The components demonstrating the greatest quantified benefits were:

- a minimum learner age of 16 years
- a minimum learner period of 12 months
- a minimum probationary licensing age of greater than 16 years (with better results with increasing age)
- night driving restrictions
- peer passenger restrictions
- zero BAC limits.

Of the components identified in the Austroads report as having significant road-safety benefits, the Victorian GLS omits only night driving restrictions for probationary licence drivers.

¹⁹⁴ *Road Traffic (Authorisation to Drive) Regulations 2014* (WA) r 10.

¹⁹⁵ Correspondence from Monica Lewis, Acting Information Release Team Leader, Driver and Vehicle Services, Department of Transport, 14 December 2016.

¹⁹⁶ Senserrick, T and Williams, A, *Summary of Literature of the Effective Components of Graduated Driver Licensing System*, Austroads, Sydney, 2015. See also Austroads, ‘About Austroads’, viewed 20 January 2017, <www.austroads.com.au/about-austroads/about-austroads>.

¹⁹⁷ Senserrick, T and Williams, A, *Summary of Literature of the Effective Components of Graduated Driver Licensing System*, Austroads, Sydney, 2015, p. i.

3.4.2 2014 National Policy Framework for GLS: structured guidance for GLS improvement

In 2014, as part of the Austroads Road Safety Taskforce, Transport for NSW commissioned Whiting Moyne to develop an evidence-based GLS policy framework.

Drawing on the ‘best available evidence of safety effects of different GLS components’, the framework outlined each individual component and the proven and purported benefits. Based on these results, it grouped the GLS components into archetypal ‘model’ GLS systems: standard, enhanced and exemplar.

The framework recognised that each jurisdiction’s GLS is slightly different, and therefore aimed to ‘highlight key GLS areas that each jurisdiction can potentially work towards addressing over time in accordance with the circumstances in their jurisdiction’.¹⁹⁸ The framework offered the following guidance for jurisdictions working towards identified best practice:

It is widely acknowledged that changing licensing policy is often a long and hard-fought process. The key elements of achieving improved GLS policy rely on having evidence of the effectiveness of a specific measure, and having reasonable levels of community support or acceptance of any proposed changes.¹⁹⁹

The framework was endorsed by all Commonwealth, State and Territory transport ministers on the Transport and Infrastructure Council in November 2014.²⁰⁰

The Victorian GLS meets all but two of the elements of the ‘exemplar’ model: namely, a recommended 15 to 20 hours of supervised driving at night during the learner phase, and a restriction on late night driving during the probationary phase.²⁰¹

3.4.3 Towards national consistency

While it is clear that the National Framework was designed to isolate key principles and highlight best practice, it did not necessarily seek to promote a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach. One of the benefits of having multiple, concurrent systems is the opportunity to review the outcomes of each system and its constituent parts. Each jurisdiction has ostensibly been able to prioritise certain elements and gradually tailor its GLS to local community needs. Further, when a jurisdiction trials and introduces a new element to its GLS, other jurisdictions may be motivated to do the same.

¹⁹⁸ Walker, E, *Australian graduated licensing scheme: Policy framework*, Transport for NSW, Chippendale, 2014, p. 5.

¹⁹⁹ Walker, E, *Australian graduated licensing scheme: Policy framework*, Transport for NSW, Chippendale, 2014.

²⁰⁰ Transport and Infrastructure Council, *Communique*, Media release, Launceston, 7 November 2014.

²⁰¹ Robyn Seymour, Director Vehicle and Road Use Policy, VicRoads, *Transcript of evidence*, 15 June 2016, pp. 11–12. See also discussion of the framework in Australasian College of Road Safety, *Submission*, no. 88, 30 May 2016, p. 4.

In the context of this inquiry, various stakeholders indicated support for national licensing consistency. For example, the Law Institute of Victoria was of the view that, for equity and access reasons, Victoria should align with the other Australian jurisdictions, at least in relation to probationary driving age.²⁰² The Committee also heard that it is an appealing concept in theory, but only if other jurisdictions work towards meeting Victoria's stringent requirements and resultant road safety outcomes.²⁰³ The RACV submitted to the Committee that because each system is meaningfully different, simply aligning the driving age will not achieve national consistency.²⁰⁴

The Committee received extensive evidence about the issues that can arise from the differing licensing systems and accompanying rules and restrictions placed on probationary drivers when driving in more than one jurisdiction, and particularly in the cross-border areas. In regard to the probationary driving age, a number of witnesses also highlighted the equity and safety issues arising from this inter-jurisdictional inconsistency.²⁰⁵

3.5 Strengthening Victoria's GLS

It was made clear to the Committee that many stakeholders consider the Victorian GLS to be a world-leading system. That said, many who gave evidence or made a submission to the inquiry suggested ways in which the Victorian GLS could be improved or 'tightened up'. The Committee heard from the Assistant Commissioner of Victoria Police, who said 'the more stringent [the GLS] is, the more lives we are going to save'.²⁰⁶

One suggestion advocated for by a number of stakeholders was the introduction of more formal driver training courses.²⁰⁷ Some Australian jurisdictions provide incentives for learner drivers to undertake driving courses, for example NSW where learners may 'trade-off' 20 hours of supervised driving in exchange for a five-hour safe driving course.²⁰⁸ VicRoads submitted that the NSW 'trade-off' approach (undertaking a driving course in exchange for supervised hours) was 'not supported by evidence' and could in fact lead to negative road safety outcomes.²⁰⁹ Further, the Austroads report made clear that evidence of specific benefits from extant programs are minimal, and that some, more advanced driver

²⁰² Law Institute of Victoria, *Submission*, no. 74, 27 May 2016, p. 8.

²⁰³ Assistant Commissioner Doug Fryer, Road Policing, Victoria Police, *Transcript of evidence*, 25 August 2016; Professor Rebecca Ivers, The George Institute for Global Health, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 October 2016.

²⁰⁴ Brian Negus, General Manager Public Policy, Royal Automobile Club of Victoria, *Transcript of evidence*, 15 June 2016, p. 17; Royal Automobile Club of Victoria (RACV) Ltd, *Submission*, no. 40, 18 May 2016, p. 3.

²⁰⁵ Assistant Commissioner Doug Fryer, Road Policing, Victoria Police, *Transcript of evidence*, 25 August 2016, p. 93; Hannah Lewis, Policy Officer, Young Agribusiness Professionals, Victorian Farmers Federation, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 September 2016, p. 140; Victorian Farmers Federation, *Submission*, no. 64, 24 May 2016, p. 3.

²⁰⁶ Assistant Commissioner Doug Fryer, Road Policing, Victoria Police, *Transcript of evidence*, 25 August 2016, p. 90.

²⁰⁷ Amanda Groux, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 September 2016, p. 136; Geoff Sharp, Chief Executive Officer, United Way Ballarat, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 September 2016, p. 163; Lori Gow, Student, Wodonga Senior Secondary College, *Transcript of evidence*, 4 October 2016, p. 239; Lynne Pryor, *Submission*, no. 25, 28 April 2016.

²⁰⁸ Roads & Maritime, 'Learner licence', viewed 9 March 2017, <www.rms.nsw.gov.au/roads/licence/driver/learner/>.

²⁰⁹ VicRoads, *Submission*, no. 91, 6 June 2016, pp. 22–23.

training has negative effects.²¹⁰ The Committee does not believe there is sufficient evidence to recommend driver training courses as an effective road safety measure.²¹¹ It also notes the Victorian Government's commitment in *Towards Zero 2016-2020: Victoria's Road Safety Strategy and Action Plan (Towards Zero)* to allocate \$80 million to establish the Road Safety Education Complex and \$24 million for a practical safe driving program for secondary school students.²¹²

In reviewing ways to enhance Victoria's GLS, the Committee agreed to focus its attention on specific, evidence-based measures that are likely to be effective additions. In the Committee's view, these include:

- requirements and restrictions for night driving for probationary drivers
- restrictions on carrying peer-aged passengers
- any further enforcement measures that could have a positive impact on road safety.

Each of these measures has been otherwise independently recommended,²¹³ and received broad support from stakeholders who contributed to the Committee's research. Interstate and international systems of interest are discussed under the relevant headings below.

3.5.1 Night driving

Of the GLS components found to be most effective in the Austroads study, the night driving restriction is the only component that Victoria's GLS lacks. Similarly, the only elements resulting in Victoria falling short of the hypothetical 'exemplar'-level GLS proposed in the 2014 Policy Framework is the lack of night-driving restrictions and the accrual of a greater number of supervised night-driving hours during the learner phase. This latter component is now a key initiative of *Towards Zero*.²¹⁴

It was made clear through public hearings and submissions to the Committee that night driving poses significant risks for newly-licensed drivers in Australia.²¹⁵ While crash risks are greater at night than during the day for all drivers,²¹⁶ young and inexperienced drivers are at greater risk again, not only because of the

210 Senserrick, T and Williams, A, *Summary of Literature of the Effective Components of Graduated Driver Licensing System*, Austroads, Sydney, 2015, p. 26.

211 Professor Rebecca Ivers, The George Institute for Global Health, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 October 2016, p. 279.

212 State Government of Victoria, *Towards Zero 2016/2020: Victoria's Road Safety Strategy & Action Plan*, Melbourne, 2016, p. 21.

213 Australian Transport Council, *National Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020*, Canberra, 2011.

214 State Government of Victoria, *Towards Zero 2016/2020: Victoria's Road Safety Strategy & Action Plan*, Melbourne, 2016, pp. 5, 21.

215 Assistant Commissioner Doug Fryer, Road Policing, Victoria Police, *Transcript of evidence*, 25 August 2016, p. 89; Dr Sharon Newnam, et al., *Submission*, no. 86, 30 May 2016, p. 12; John Merritt, Chief Executive, VicRoads, *Transcript of evidence*, 15 June 2016, p. 3; Professor Rebecca Ivers, The George Institute for Global Health, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 October 2016, p. 282; Associate Professor Teresa Senserrick, Transport and Road Safety (TARS) Research UNSW, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 October 2016, p. 272. See also reports by Senserrick, T and Williams, A, *Summary of Literature of the Effective Components of Graduated Driver Licensing System*, Austroads, Sydney, 2015, pp. 23, 35; Walker, E, *Australian graduated licensing scheme: Policy framework*, Transport for NSW, Chippendale, 2014, p. 13.

216 Associate Professor Teresa Senserrick, Transport and Road Safety (TARS) Research UNSW, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 October 2016, p. 272.

increased difficulty in perceiving hazards, but also because they typically spend more time driving at night for recreational purposes.²¹⁷ This type of ‘recreational driving’ is particularly dangerous, it was submitted, as social interaction increases distractions to the driver. Further, as there are fewer vehicles on the roads, drivers may travel at higher speeds, follow other vehicles more closely²¹⁸ and take risks that they might not take during the day.²¹⁹ Fatigue (especially during long drives) and alcohol can also play a large part in heightened risks for young people driving at night.²²⁰

These risks underlie the current night-time restrictions in multiple jurisdictions, including night peer passenger restrictions, night-driving restrictions during the probationary stage, and mandated supervised night-driving hours in the learner stage. The importance of training for and restricting night driving for new drivers is identified in *Towards Zero*:

The next step in supporting safer young drivers will focus on the importance of safe driving at night, when half of serious crashes happen. Doubling the night time supervised driving hour requirements for learner drivers – going from 10 to 20 hours – is part of a new strategy for night driving.

Newly-licensed P1 drivers will also be encouraged to keep their late night driving to a minimum, given the elevated risks, until they build up more driving experience.²²¹

As echoed in a number of submissions to the Committee, both of these night-driving related changes are appropriate for introduction into the Victorian GLS.²²²

Night-drive restrictions (Probationary phase)

The effectiveness of night driving restrictions in reducing crashes is well established,²²³ particularly in the United States (US), where forms of night-driving restrictions for younger drivers pre-date formal GLS in many states.²²⁴

As noted above, WA has a blanket night driving restriction for all P1 drivers, similar to that in SA, which applies to P1 drivers under 25. NSW and Queensland restrict young and newly-licensed drivers from carrying peer passengers when driving at night. The 2013 review of the night-driving restrictions in WA showed crash involvement of drivers aged 17–19 in the first six months of probationary

²¹⁷ Dr Sharon Newnam, et al., *Submission*, no. 86, 30 May 2016, p. 12., Department for Transport, Energy and Infrastructure, *South Australia's Graduated Licensing Scheme: Initiatives to Protect Young Drivers: A Discussion Paper*, Government of South Australia, Adelaide, 2011, p. 9. The greater amount of time younger drivers spend driving at night is attributed in this report to recreational driving.

²¹⁸ Dr Sharon Newnam, et al., *Submission*, no. 86, 30 May 2016, p. 31.

²¹⁹ Walker, E, *Australian graduated licensing scheme: Policy framework*, Transport for NSW, Chippendale, 2014, p. 15.

²²⁰ Department for Transport, Energy and Infrastructure, *South Australia's Graduated Licensing Scheme: Initiatives to Protect Young Drivers: A Discussion Paper*, Government of South Australia, Adelaide, 2011, p. 9.

²²¹ State Government of Victoria, *Towards Zero 2016/2020: Victoria's Road Safety Strategy & Action Plan*, Melbourne, 2016, p. 21.

²²² Aicha Bah, Jana Boden, Emma O'Bree, Griffith University Law School Students, *Submission*, no. 85, 30 May 2016, pp. 38–41.

²²³ Walker, E, *Australian graduated licensing scheme: Policy framework*, Transport for NSW, Chippendale, 2014, p. 15.

²²⁴ Senserrick, T and Williams, A, *Summary of Literature of the Effective Components of Graduated Driver Licensing System*, Austroads, Sydney, 2015, p. 33.

licensing was far lower²²⁵ after the restrictions were put in place (in 2008) than previously.²²⁶ Further, it was estimated by CASR that the 2014 SA night drive restrictions would reduce ‘serious and fatal crashes involving ... drivers aged 16–17 years’.²²⁷

Timing

Although the Australian jurisdictions with night driving restrictions designate the hours between midnight and 5 am, the Committee is aware of the debate about whether restrictions should begin earlier in the evening, and what range of hours has the greatest road safety benefits.²²⁸ Risks around visual impediments and difficulty perceiving hazards are no doubt linked to darkness, rather than time, while risks around driver distraction, recreational driving and risk-taking may be equally present in early evening and late at night. The Committee heard that crash risks are higher in the early evening than during the daytime,²²⁹ and that consequently, ‘earlier start times yield greater benefits’.²³⁰

There is also a strong, evidence-based push in the US for individual jurisdictions to impose earlier night driving restrictions (the start time currently ranging anywhere from 8 pm to 1 am). The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety/ Highway Loss Data Institute (IIHS/HLDI) uses the span of night driving restrictions as one of its key indicators of a strong GLS, and shows how crash rates would be affected by a change in hours designated.²³¹ For example, compared to having no night driving restrictions, it was shown that restrictions starting at 9 pm reduced ‘teen driver fatal crash rates’ by 18 per cent.²³²

The Canadian Traffic Injury Research Foundation (TIRF), with co-operation from the IIHS, is conducting a three-stage GLS review and framework which, among other GLS components, assessed night-time driving restrictions. Phase one was completed in 2014 and comprised a comprehensive international evidence review, which considered the systems and relevant innovations in a wide range of GLS countries, including drawing on the views of a number of Australian experts. In recommending that night-time driving restrictions (almost ubiquitous throughout the US and Canada) be brought in across the board, the report strongly emphasised the safety gains in starting night-driving restrictions

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- 225 The Western Australia Office of Road Safety estimates a reduction of 58 per cent, compared to drivers aged 20 years or over, most of whom would no longer be under P1 restrictions.
 - 226 Commentary on these reductions notes that the significant drop could be partly attributable to other factors not controlled for in the review: Walker, E, *Australian graduated licensing scheme: Policy framework*, Transport for NSW, Chippendale, 2014, p. 38.
 - 227 Department for Transport, Energy and Infrastructure, *South Australia's Graduated Licensing Scheme: Initiatives to Protect Young Drivers: A Discussion Paper*, Government of South Australia, Adelaide, 2011, p. 9.
 - 228 Aicha Bah, Jana Boden, Emma O'Bree, Griffith University Law School Students, *Submission*, no. 85, 30 May 2016, pp. 42–43.
 - 229 Senserrick, T and Williams, A, *Summary of Literature of the Effective Components of Graduated Driver Licensing System*, Austroads, Sydney, 2015, p. 34.
 - 230 Senserrick, T and Williams, A, *Summary of Literature of the Effective Components of Graduated Driver Licensing System*, Austroads, Sydney, 2015, pp. 35–36, 49.
 - 231 See IIHS GDL Crash Reduction Calculator: Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, ‘Teenagers: Driving carries extra risk for them: Graduated driver licensing’, viewed 21 December 2016, <www.iihs.org/iihs/topics/t/teenagers/qanda#teenagers--graduated-driver-licensing>. See discussion at Senserrick, T and Williams, A, *Summary of Literature of the Effective Components of Graduated Driver Licensing System*, Austroads, Sydney, 2015, p. 34.
 - 232 Dr Sharon Newnam, et al., *Submission*, no. 86, 30 May 2016.

earlier. The report referred to significant studies, which indicated that a starting time of 9 or 10 pm is optimal, noting that the largest proportion of night-time (9 pm – 6 am) teenage fatalities take place prior to midnight.²³³ Phase two of the review, published in 2016, provided an overview of US jurisdictions' range of night-driving restrictions. Fifty of the 51 jurisdictions have night-time driving restrictions, with a range of starting times:

- midnight in 17 states
- 12:30 am in two states
- 1:00 am in five states
- 10:00 pm or earlier in 13 states.²³⁴

The review noted that the ending time for these restrictions varies widely (from sunrise, 4 am and 6 am), but it did not make a recommendation on the optimum ending time, as 'there is no evidence on any differences in safety benefits'.²³⁵ Phase three of the review, a practical implementation plan, taking into account jurisdictional difference, is currently being completed.²³⁶

The duration of night driving restriction across licensing phases also varies widely throughout the US, with restrictions applying for between six months and two years. In the Victorian context, applying restrictions to the P1 phase would mean a one-year restriction.

The Committee is very much aware of the importance of balancing road safety with the mobility and access to services for young people. It was suggested in evidence that one of the reasons that Victoria has not introduced night driving restrictions is that it limits the mobility and autonomy of drivers who have turned at least 18—that is, those who are otherwise considered adults and are likely enjoying an independent work and social life.²³⁷ The night-driving restrictions in other jurisdictions generally apply to drivers from the age of 17, although an overall trend of young people delaying licensure means that this exemption often applies to those 18 years and older.²³⁸

Exemptions

Similar to WA and SA, most US jurisdictions allow exemptions from the night-driving restrictions for some purposes, including legitimate formal education or training, medical appointments or emergencies, and employment. The Committee agrees with the large number of witnesses and submitters who

²³³ Mayhew, D, et al., *A New GDL Framework: Evidence Base to Integrate Novice Driver Strategies*, Traffic Injury Research Foundation, Ottawa, 2014, p. 12-13.

²³⁴ Mayhew, D, et al., *A New GDL Framework: Planning for the Future*, Traffic Injury Research Foundation, Ottawa, 2016, p. 13.. Note also that two states (Idaho and South Carolina) have starting times prior to 8:00 pm.

²³⁵ Mayhew, D, et al., *A New GDL Framework: Evidence Base to Integrate Novice Driver Strategies*, Traffic Injury Research Foundation, Ottawa, 2014, p. 9.

²³⁶ See discussion in Mayhew, D, et al., *A New GDL Framework: Planning for the Future*, Traffic Injury Research Foundation, Ottawa, 2016, p. vi.

²³⁷ See discussion in Associate Professor Teresa Senserrick, Transport and Road Safety (TARS) Research UNSW, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 October 2016, p. 272.

²³⁸ Delaying licensure is discussed in more detail in Chapter Two.

supported the inclusion of night-driving restrictions into the Victorian GLS.²³⁹ Should night driving restrictions be introduced into the Victorian GLS, the Committee is strongly of the view that there should be reasonable exemptions, and that these exemptions should be structured similarly to those in WA and SA.

P1 drivers in WA and SA must provide documentation to a police officer if they are pulled over driving at otherwise prohibited hours. The WA Department of Transport (DoT) explained that it is effectively up to the police to ‘determine what is considered acceptable proof for those exemptions’. The DoT suggested a letter from school or employer on letterhead as an appropriate example of what might constitute proof. The Committee understands that the relevant regulations governing the WA night-driving restrictions do not specify how P1 drivers are to prove their legitimate purposes for night driving.

For Victorian purposes, the Committee recommends that the regulations governing the exemption contain a designated form which requires specific contact and disclosure details from the signatory (the employer, teacher or relevant person). More specifically, any employer or educational institution providing a letter of proof should provide identifying details such as an Australian Business Number (ABN), company stamp or seal, and the signature and contact details of the signatory or responsible person, in addition to details of the time and place of work or study at which the driver is required. This will facilitate consistent decision-making by individual police officers, and provide clarity about the requirements to those drivers seeking exemptions.

The Committee considers the WA model of a defence-style ‘exemption’ a more agile solution, preferable to that which relies on pre-application to a responsible agency. This is in response to concerns heard by the Committee that providing for exemptions to various GLS requirements would place an administrative burden on the responsible agencies. There was also legitimate concern about young people having to seek an exemption before they can take up opportunities that require night driving. Clearly, young people should be able to know what their licence conditions are, and whether they will be able to take advantage of any exemption, before applying for or undertaking specific types of employment or study, such as night shift or evening classes.

Lastly, as with the SA and WA systems, the restrictions should not apply where a fully-licensed driver (with a BAC under 0.05) is accompanying the P1 driver.

RECOMMENDATION 1: Night driving restrictions between 10 pm and 5 am be introduced for drivers at the probationary P1 phase, accompanied by reasonable exemptions where appropriate.

²³⁹ For example, Professor Rebecca Ivers, The George Institute for Global Health, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 October 2016, p. 279; Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, *Submission*, no. 77, 27 May 2016, p. 1; Associate Professor Teresa Senserrick, Transport and Road Safety (TARS) Research UNSW, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 October 2016, p. 272.

Greater amount of supervised night-drive hours (Learner phase)

The current requirements for Australian jurisdictions mandating supervised driving hours at night during the learner’s phase are as follows:

Table 3.2 Compulsory supervised night-driving hours in learner phase

Compulsory hours	Jurisdiction
20 hours	NSW
15 hours	SA
10 hours	Vic, Qld
no night hours required	Tas, ³ ACT, WA, ⁴ NT ⁵

The Committee has not received any specific data showing the effectiveness of requiring a greater number of supervised night-driving hours in improving crash outcomes or road safety more generally.²⁴⁰ However, as noted above, heightened risk posed to new drivers at night, and their disproportionate representation in night-time crashes is well-recognised. It follows, therefore, that preparation for and exposure to an identified risky environment may have significant benefits in preparing new drivers to become comfortable with night driving.

Although no specific number of hours has emerged as best practice, the Committee notes that the 2014 Framework ‘exemplar’ model recommends 15 to 20 hours of a learner’s supervised driving to take place at night.²⁴¹ Currently, only NSW and SA meet this criterion. Doubling the requirement from ten to 20 hours is now identified as part of *Towards Zero*.²⁴²

The Committee supports this move, given the general idea that more experience in specific risky driving conditions is important for learner drivers.²⁴³

FINDING 6: An increase of the requirement for supervised night-driving hours for learner drivers from ten hours to 20 hours is an important addition to the Victorian graduated licensing scheme.

3.5.2 Extending peer passenger restrictions

Victorian P1 drivers may not carry more than one ‘peer passenger’ (aged 16–21 years), unless supervised by a fully-licensed driver. Other exemptions to this requirement include:

240 Although in a different training format, the 2015 Austroads report draws attention to a Norwegian study following a mandatory night-driving course for learners which is said to have significantly lowered crash rates at night or in darkness, Senserrick, T and Williams, A, *Summary of Literature of the Effective Components of Graduated Driver Licensing System*, Austroads, Sydney, 2015, p. 23.

241 Walker, E, *Australian graduated licensing scheme: Policy framework*, Transport for NSW, Chippendale, 2014, p. 7.

242 State Government of Victoria, *Towards Zero 2016/2020: Victoria’s Road Safety Strategy & Action Plan*, Melbourne, 2016, p. 21.

243 Walker, E, *Australian graduated licensing scheme: Policy framework*, Transport for NSW, Chippendale, 2014, p. 13.

- a driver who is a member of the police force and is driving a motor vehicle in the course of duty, or
- a driver who is driving an emergency vehicle in the course of employment or duties or in accordance with terms of a contract or any engagement, or whose driver licence is subject to a condition that prevents carriage of more than one other person, or
- a driver who is driving a motor vehicle while under the instruction of a driving coach who is present in the vehicle, or
- when VicRoads has granted an exemption from this restriction.²⁴⁴

Other Australian jurisdictions with peer passenger requirements are shown in the below table.

Table 3.3 Peer passenger restrictions during P1 phase

Jurisdiction	Peer passenger restrictions during P1 phase
NSW	Night-time passenger restrictions for drivers under 25. Only one passenger under 21 between 11–5.
Qld	Night-time passenger restrictions for drivers under 25. Only one passenger under 21 between 11–5.
SA	No more than one passenger between the ages of 16 – 20 years at any time.

Passenger restrictions apply in New Zealand, with drivers on a restricted licence (equivalent to the probationary licence in Victoria) prohibited from carrying any passengers at any time, except for some members of their immediate family,²⁴⁵ for the minimum 18 months' duration of the restricted licence. The passenger restrictions do not apply when the restricted driver is supervised by a fully-licensed driver.

The risk of crash involvement increases with each peer-aged passenger in the vehicle.²⁴⁶ As identified in the 2011 review of the SA GLS, having passengers in the car can distract young drivers and reduce their concentration on the road and potential hazards. It may also encourage inexperienced drivers to take greater risks, particularly when their passengers are peer-aged.²⁴⁷

One young witness, supporting the introduction of peer passenger restrictions in Victoria, agreed that there were risks in carrying peer passengers:

It should really be restricted to overloading, because if you have got all your mates in the car, then you tend to do stupid things to impress them.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁴ VicRoads, 'P1 & P2 probationary licence restrictions', viewed 9 March 2017, <www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/licences/your-ps/p1-and-p2-probationary-licence-restrictions>.

²⁴⁵ Being their spouse/partner, their parent/guardian, their child or spouse's child, another person who lives with the driver and is under their care, or someone for whom the driver is the primary caregiver: New Zealand Transport Agency, *Restricted Licence Conditions*: www.nzta.govt.nz/driver-licences/getting-a-licence/licences-by-vehicle-type/cars/restricted-licence-2/

²⁴⁶ Dr Sharon Newnam, et al., *Submission*, no. 86, 30 May 2016, p. 11; Walker, E, *Australian graduated licensing scheme: Policy framework*, Transport for NSW, Chippendale, 2014, p. 16.

²⁴⁷ Department for Transport, Energy and Infrastructure, *South Australia's Graduated Licensing Scheme: Initiatives to Protect Young Drivers: A Discussion Paper*, Government of South Australia, Adelaide, 2011, p. 8., Dr Sharon Newnam, et al., *Submission*, no. 86, 30 May 2016, p. 12.

²⁴⁸ Jack Beer, Student, Wodonga Senior Secondary College, *Transcript of evidence*, 4 October 2016, p. 242.

It was estimated by the CASR that introducing peer passenger restrictions in SA would reduce the amount of fatal crashes involving drivers aged 16 to 17 years by 10 to 14 per cent.²⁴⁹ As noted above, these restrictions were consequently implemented.

The 2012 interim review of Victoria's GLS showed a significant (57%, or ~70 crash involvements/year) decrease in the crash involvements of young drivers carrying two or more peer passengers in the years following the introduction of the peer passenger restriction.²⁵⁰ Although the Committee heard evidence from VicRoads about the deaths of passengers aged 15 to 17 years in vehicles driven by 18 year-olds in 2015 (see chapter four).²⁵¹

Similarly, a 2012 US national study on GLS and fatal crashes of teenage drivers found:

The fatal crash rate for 15-17 year-olds was 21 percent lower when novice drivers were prohibited from having any teenage passengers in their vehicles, compared with when two or more passengers were allowed. Allowing one passenger reduced the fatal crash rate for 15-17 year-olds by 7 percent.²⁵²

Despite differences in each state's GLS, US systems use peer passenger restrictions to strong effect across the country.²⁵³ The 2014 TIRF Report collated the 'clear evidence that having young passengers in cars driven by teenagers increases fatal crash risk' echoing the above evidence that even one passenger substantially increases risks:

In the most recent study, the fatal crash risk per mile traveled quadrupled for 16-17-year old drivers when there were three or more passengers younger than age 21 and no older passengers in the vehicle, compared with the time when driving alone. However, with one young passenger there was a 44% greater risk of driver death in a crash per mile traveled compared with having no passengers. For all crashes, risks of involvement followed this same pattern but were smaller and not statistically significant (Tefft et al. 2013). Both state and national studies have reported positive effects of passenger restrictions, and crash reductions have been reported for both fatal and nonfatal crashes (e.g., Masten and Hagge 2004; Chaudhary et al. 2007; Fell et al. 2011b; Vanlaar et al. 2009). However, where to set the passenger limit to yield the most positive effect has not been settled.²⁵⁴

²⁴⁹ Department for Transport, Energy and Infrastructure, *South Australia's Graduated Licensing Scheme: Initiatives to Protect Young Drivers: A Discussion Paper*, Government of South Australia, Adelaide, 2011, p. 8.

²⁵⁰ Those drivers carrying peer passengers were compared to a control group: Healy, D, et al., *Victoria's Graduated Licensing System Evaluation Interim Report*, Kew, 2012, p. 26.

²⁵¹ John Merritt, Chief Executive, VicRoads, *Transcript of evidence*, 15 June 2016, p. 3.

²⁵² McCartt, A, et al., 'Graduated licensing laws and fatal crashes of teenage drivers: a national study', *Traffic Injury Prevention*, vol. 11, no. 3, 2010, p. 13.

²⁵³ Walker, E, *Australian graduated licensing scheme: Policy framework*, Transport for NSW, Chippendale, 2014, p. 16.

²⁵⁴ Mayhew, D, et al., *A New GDL Framework: Evidence Base to Integrate Novice Driver Strategies*, Traffic Injury Research Foundation, Ottawa, 2014, pp. 9-10.

The 2015 Austroads literature review described ‘consistent evidence’ of the effectiveness of peer passenger restrictions, a conclusion echoed within many submissions to this inquiry.²⁵⁵ It also identified a research gap in determining ideal combinations of age of passengers and an appropriate duration for restriction on probationary drivers.²⁵⁶

The 2014 GLS framework identified restrictions on carrying multiple peer-age passengers during the P1 phase as one of the components of an ‘exemplar’-level GLS, and recommended that all jurisdictions consider implementing them.²⁵⁷ As Victoria already requires this of P1 drivers, the question is whether there is utility in either:

- prohibiting P1 drivers from carrying any peer passengers or
- extending the P1 peer passenger restriction beyond the P1 stage to the P2 stage, or to young, fully-licensed drivers under a certain age.

As shown above, some jurisdictions have limitations on probationary drivers carrying peer passengers, while others limit these restrictions to night time hours only. The Committee was not provided with any evidence that compared the effectiveness of these two approaches.

The Committee notes that if the probationary licensing age were to be reduced to 17 years, the overall age of the driving cohort would theoretically be ‘brought forward’ by one year. Therefore, the first year of the P2 phase would cover the same minimum age group of people currently covered by the P1 phase. This may provide a further reason for considering the extension of peer passenger restriction to at least the first year of the P2 phase.

There is strong evidence to support peer passenger restrictions in the P1 licensing period. To address concerns about mobility, equity, and the utility of having a driver’s license, any extension of the current peer passenger restriction would need to retain reasonable exemptions.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Probationary one drivers be restricted from carrying any peer passengers.

3.5.3 Greater penalties and stricter standards for novice drivers

In some jurisdictions, there are greater penalties and/or stricter standards for probationary or newly-licensed drivers in relation to speeding or alcohol-related offences. These can include higher fines and longer periods of suspension than other licensed drivers.

²⁵⁵ Aicha Bah, Jana Boden, Emma O’Bree, Griffith University Law School Students, *Submission*, no. 85, 30 May 2016, pp. 44–45.

²⁵⁶ Senserrick, T and Williams, A, *Summary of Literature of the Effective Components of Graduated Driver Licensing System*, Austroads, Sydney, 2015, pp. 36–38.

²⁵⁷ Walker, E, *Australian graduated licensing scheme: Policy framework*, Transport for NSW, Chippendale, 2014, p. 16.

An example of stricter standards is the widely-used approach of limiting the amount of demerit points accruable by probationary or newly-licensed drivers.²⁵⁸ In Victoria, the threshold amount of demerit points depends not only on the licence held, but in some cases, on the driver's age:

Table 3.4 Demerit point limits in Victoria²⁵⁹

Licence type	Demerit point limits
Full licence	12 points in any 3 year period
Learner permit	5 points in any 12 month period, or 12 points in any 3 year period
Probationary (P1 or P2) licence	5 points in any 12 month period, or 12 points in any 3 year period
Overseas licence holder under 22 years of age	5 points in any 12 month period, or 12 points in any 3 year period
Overseas licence holder over 22 years of age	12 points in any 3 year period

The Victorian limits are *prima facie* more lenient than those in NSW, ACT and SA, and are similar to those in Queensland, Tasmania and NT.²⁶⁰

In NSW, extra penalties for speeding on a probationary licence, effectively create a 'zero tolerance' approach. Any P1 driver caught driving over the speed limit will incur a minimum four demerit points, automatically sending them over the lowered demerit point threshold and incurring a minimum three month licence suspension.²⁶¹ The Committee heard that a similar approach may 'improve the safety of young drivers' in Victoria.²⁶²

Similarly, in SA, any breach of licence conditions, or accrual of four or more demerit points during the P1 phase results in a six month licence disqualification. This includes any drink-driving, and any speeding (over 10km/hr above the speed limit).

Clearly, mandating stricter penalties for novice drivers is a balancing act. Stricter penalties have been shown to be effective in many cases, but the extra hurdles should not be so high as to encourage young people to drive unlicensed. The Committee is of the view that further evaluation of these measures should be undertaken before any introduction into the Victorian system.

²⁵⁸ Walker, E, *Australian graduated licensing scheme: Policy framework*, Transport for NSW, Chippendale, 2014, p. 18.

²⁵⁹ VicRoads, 'About demerit points', viewed 20 January 2017, <www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/licences/demerit-points-and-offences/about-demerit-points>.

²⁶⁰ For further details on demerit point thresholds in all Australian jurisdictions, see the table at Appendix 3

²⁶¹ See conditions detailed by NSW Road and Maritime Services: Roads & Maritime, 'Provisional P1 licence', viewed 20 January 2017, <www.rms.nsw.gov.au/roads/licence/driver/p1.html>.

²⁶² Professor Rebecca Ivers, The George Institute for Global Health, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 October 2016, p. 279.

4 Young people and road trauma

The safety of young people on the roads is a key theme of this inquiry. Under the Safe System approach, young newly-licensed drivers benefit from the broader safety measures incorporated into the design of the road transport system. Such measures include development and promotion of safe infrastructure and vehicles, in addition to appropriate legislation and enforcement relating to, among other things, seat belts, alcohol and speed. Countries with relatively safe roads overall, as demonstrated in road trauma data, are also typically safer for young drivers.²⁶³ This is evident in Victoria, where it is recognised as being at the forefront of Australia and international efforts to reduce road trauma. In 2015, the number of annual road deaths per 100,000 population was 4.2, which was below the Australian average of 5.1.²⁶⁴

The Safe System approach also acknowledges that many crashes result from drivers making simple mistakes. This also applies to young drivers, the majority of whom aim to drive safely. Despite this, they are over-represented in road trauma data. Chapter four explores this issue further, and in particular the contributing factors to the crash involvement of young drivers.

This chapter also explores whether the safety of young people on the roads can be achieved with a probationary driving age of 17. This question specifically addresses Term of Reference (ToR) 1(e), which required the Committee to assess the correlation between the driving age and the road toll.

4.1 Young drivers and road trauma

According to the Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety-Queensland (CARRS-Q), newly-licensed drivers are typically over-represented in single vehicle crashes and others including rear-end crashes, right-hand turns at intersections, and running off the road or losing control of their vehicle, particularly on curves.²⁶⁵ Data from the Australian Road Deaths Database, from 2010 to 2016, shows that there were 192 crashes across Australia that resulted in the death of a 17 or 18 year-old driver. Of these crashes, 69 per cent were single-vehicle crashes, compared to 31 per cent multiple-vehicle crashes.²⁶⁶ Young

²⁶³ Twisk, D and Colin, S, 'Trends in young driver risk and countermeasures in European countries', *Journal of Safety Research*, vol. 38, no. 2, 2007, p. 5.

²⁶⁴ Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics, *Road trauma Australia: 2015 statistical summary*, Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development, Canberra, 2015, p. 24.

²⁶⁵ CARRS-Q, 'Novice drivers', viewed 16 January 2017, <www.carrs.qut.edu.au/publications/corporate/novice_drivers_fs.pdf>.

²⁶⁶ Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics, 'Australian Road Deaths Database', viewed 7 February 2017, <bitre.gov.au/statistics/safety/fatal_road_crash_database.aspx>.

rural drivers are at greater risk of having single-vehicle crashes, often the result of curved roads and speeding. Further, single-vehicle crashes are more likely to result in serious injury or death compared to other crash types.²⁶⁷

The contributing factor of speed in single-vehicle crashes is common among young and newly-licensed drivers, as they have limited experience in safely controlling their vehicle at speed or matching the vehicle speed with the conditions of the road. As explained by Robyn Seymour, Director of Vehicle and Road Use Policy at VicRoads:

One big issue is actually inappropriate speed. So there is speeding, and there is inappropriate speed... that young people have made a poor decision around their speed going around a corner. They have misjudged their speed...That is definitely an issue for young drivers, and the inappropriate speed is inexperience.²⁶⁸

Further, it is well established that newly-licensed drivers are less proficient than experienced drivers in handling dynamic traffic situations. It takes time and practice to build up these skills and effectively anticipate and respond to hazards in the driving environment. In particular, hazard perception involves 'scanning of the traffic environment, evaluating other drivers' location, predicting objects and other drivers' behaviour and acting on that information'.²⁶⁹ It is well understood that hazard perception, or lack of, is associated with at-fault crashes by newly-licensed drivers.²⁷⁰

4.1.1 Harm to themselves

Fatalities

Compared to the broader population, young people are over-represented in crash data for both fatalities and serious injuries. While drivers aged 18 to 25 years represented 21 per cent of drivers killed on Victorian roads in 2014, they comprised only 13 per cent of drivers overall.²⁷¹ The Committee also notes, however, that road deaths for young people has reduced over the years. Across Australia, crash fatalities in the 17 to 25 age group had the fastest rate of decrease in the decade to 2015 among all age groups. In 2015, they accounted for 18.8 per cent of fatalities. In comparison, road users aged 65 years and over accounted for 22.3 per cent of all fatalities, which had risen from 14.2 per cent in the last ten years.²⁷²

²⁶⁷ The George Institute for Global Health Australia, *Rural Roads Dangerous For Young Drivers*, Media release, 22 September 2009.

²⁶⁸ Robyn Seymour, Director Vehicle and Road Use Policy, VicRoads, *Transcript of evidence*, 15 June 2016, p. 10.

²⁶⁹ Senserrick, TM and Mistopoulos-Rubens, E, 'Behavioural Adaptation and Novice Drivers', in *Behavioural Adaptation and Road Safety: Theory, Evidence and Action*, Christina M. Rudin-Brown and Samantha L. Jamson (eds), CRC Press, Florida, 2013, p. 248.

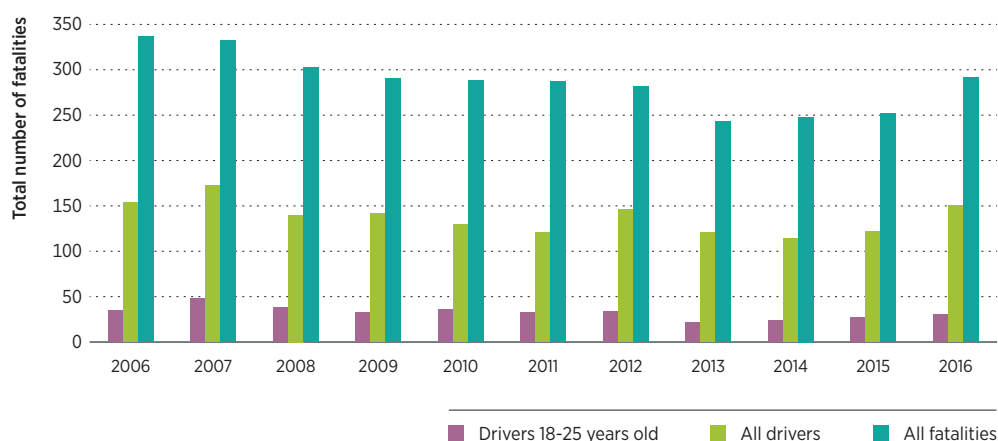
²⁷⁰ Oxley, J, et al., *Understanding novice driver behaviour: Review of Literature*, Monash University Accident Research Centre, Monash Injury Research Institute, and University of Waikato, Clayton, 2014.

²⁷¹ VicRoads, *Submission*, no. 91, 6 June 2016, p. 5.

²⁷² Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics, *Road trauma Australia: 2015 statistical summary*, Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development, Canberra, 2015, pp. 1, 6-7.

In Victoria, as shown in Figure 4.1, there is no discernible trend in the fatality rates for 18 to 25 year-old drivers as they rise and fall from year to year, although there has been a decline overall in the last ten years. This decline is also reflected in fatality rates for all Victorian road users, although the Committee notes the recent rise in the 2016 road toll.

Figure 4.1 Victorian crash fatalities for 18 to 25 year-old drivers, compared to all driver and road user fatalities²⁷³



For the purposes of the inquiry, it was important to analyse data as it relates to 18 year-old drivers, as this is the first possible year of licensure in Victoria. The Committee also reviewed data for 19 year-old drivers on the basis that young people are delaying the age of licensure, as discussed in chapter two. As of June 2014, 40 per cent of 18 year-old Victorians had obtained their probationary licence, but this rose to 58.2 per cent for 19 year-olds. It is also important to distinguish between types of road users and separate the data accordingly, as the primary focus in licensing is the driver. The tables outlined below show fatality data for 18 and 19 year-old road users from 2006 to 2016 in Victoria, and similar data for 17 and 18 year olds in all other jurisdictions, noting their lower probationary driving age.

Table 4.1 below relates only to Victoria, and the data is broken down according to road users and sex. Based on this data, the number of 18 year-old driver fatalities on Victorian roads is low, even when compared to the overall road toll. The number of fatalities for 19 year-old drivers rises and falls, although there was a decrease in 2016 despite an overall increase in the Victorian road toll of 16 per cent from the previous year.

Table 4.2 below contains data relating to 18 year-old drivers in all Australian jurisdictions, although it does not stipulate whether the drivers are licensed or unlicensed. Overall the data reflects a long-term decline in fatalities for this age group across Australia. In particular, the number of fatalities is low in jurisdictions with a lower probationary driving age.

²⁷³ Transport Accident Commission, 'Searchable Road Trauma Statistics', viewed 7 February 2017, <www.tac.vic.gov.au/road-safety/statistics/online-crash-database>.

Table 4.1 Victorian fatality data for 18 and 19 year-old road users (2006-2016)²⁷⁴

Year	18 year olds				19 year olds				Total Vic fatalities
	Road user	Sex	Total fatalities	Total driver fatalities	Road user	Sex	Total fatalities	Total driver fatalities	
2006	11 Drivers 5 Passengers 1 Motorcyclist	6 Females 11 Males	17	11	3 Drivers 1 Passengers 1 Motorcyclist	5 Males	5	3	309
2007	11 Drivers 5 Passengers 2 Motorcyclists	2 Females 16 Males	18	11	7 Drivers 1 Passengers	2 Females 6 Males	8	7	289
2008	5 Drivers 2 Passengers	4 Females 3 Males	7	5	5 Drivers 3 Passengers 1 Motorcyclist 1 Pedestrian	2 Females 8 Males	10	5	278
2009	4 Drivers 5 Passengers 2 Motorcyclists 2 Pedestrians	6 Females 7 Males	13	4	6 Drivers 6 Passengers	4 Females 8 Males	12	6	268
2010	5 Drivers 3 Passengers 1 Pedestrian	3 Females 6 Males	9	5	9 Drivers 3 Passengers 2 Motorcyclists	1 Female 13 Males	14	9	260
2011	2 Drivers 2 Passengers 1 Motorcyclist 1 Pedestrian	1 Female 5 Males	6	2	8 Drivers 4 Passengers	6 Female 6 Males	12	8	259
2012	6 Drivers 4 Passengers	3 Females 7 Males	10	6	4 Drivers 4 Passengers 1 Motorcyclist 1 Pedestrian	3 Females 7 Males	10	4	261
2013	2 Drivers 1 Passenger	2 Females 1 Male	3	2	5 Drivers 1 Passenger 1 Motorcyclist	2 Females 5 Males	7	5	225
2014	1 Driver 2 Passengers	2 Females 1 Male	3	1	5 Drivers 3 Passengers 1 Motorcyclist	3 Females 9 Males	9	5	223
2015	7 Drivers 3 Passengers	1 Female 9 Males	10	7	7 Drivers 2 Passengers	4 Females 5 Males	9	7	252
2016	6 Drivers 1 Passenger 1 Motorcyclist 1 Motorcycle pillion passenger	3 Females 6 Males	9	6	5 Drivers	2 Females 3 Males	5	5	292

²⁷⁴ Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics, 'Australian Road Deaths Database', viewed 7 February 2017, <bitre.gov.au/statistics/safety/fatal_road_crash_database.aspx>.

Table 4.2 Fatality data by jurisdiction for 18 year-old drivers (2006-2016)²⁷⁵

Year	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	Total (Aus)
2006	Nil	9	1	4	1	3	11	10	39
2007	Nil	6	No data	9	2	1	11	6	35
2008	Nil	5	2	4	Nil	1	5	2	19
2009	Nil	5	Nil	8	1	Nil	4	4	22
2010	1	8	1	4	4	1	5	1	25
2011	Nil	3	1	4	1	1	2	5	17
2012	Nil	3	Not recorded ^(a)	2	1	1	6	2	15
2013	Nil	6	1	3	1	Nil	2	2	15
2014	No data	4	1	2	1	No data	1	2	11
2015	Nil	6	Nil	2	2	2	7	1	20
2016	Nil	5	Nil	Nil	1	1	6	1	14

(a) The BITRE data records this as an 'unknown' death. There is a statistic, a death, but there is no other information except the age of the person

Table 4.3 Fatality data by jurisdiction for 17 year-old drivers (2006-2016)²⁷⁶

Year	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	WA	Total
2006	Nil	8	1	6	2	1	3	21
2007	Nil	8	No data collected	3	4	1	Nil	16
2008	Nil	6	Nil	7	2	Nil	5	20
2009	Nil	3	Nil	Nil	2	1	2	8
2010	Nil	6	Nil	3	3	Nil	4	16
2011	Nil	4	Nil	4	1	Nil	2	11
2012	Nil	5	Nil	3	1	Nil	3	12
2013	Nil	4	Nil	5	Nil	Nil	1	10
2014	No data collected	2	Nil	1	1	No data collected	1	5
2015	Nil	5	Nil	3	2	Nil	1	11
2016	Nil	7	Nil	2	Nil	Nil	1	10

²⁷⁵ Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics, 'Australian Road Deaths Database', viewed 7 February 2017, <bitre.gov.au/statistics/safety/fatal_road_crash_database.aspx>.

²⁷⁶ Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics, 'Australian Road Deaths Database', viewed 7 February 2017, <bitre.gov.au/statistics/safety/fatal_road_crash_database.aspx>.

As reflected in Table 4.3, the data is also clear for 17 year-old drivers, in that the number of fatalities is small in those jurisdictions with a lower probationary licensing age. In 2016, there were ten fatalities for 17 year-old drivers. The overall average across the decade was between 11 to 17 deaths. The long-term trend across jurisdictions has been a decline over time, particularly in South Australia, Queensland and Western Australia. In the Northern Territory, there was a single fatality in the decade covered, and there were no fatalities in the Australian Capital Territory. It is important to acknowledge, however, that this does not necessarily reflect their overall road safety performance but rather that they have a smaller cohort of young people and a different context to the rest of Australia.²⁷⁷ These characteristics are also relevant to Tasmania.

In considering the decline in fatalities and serious injuries across Australia after 2007, the Committee notes possible contributing factors such as: the introduction of graduated licensing schemes (GLS), weather, and fuel price sensitivity. Further data analysis could involve comparisons over time in relation to population figures, total licence numbers and registered vehicle numbers. The Committee was not in a position to conduct these analyses but believes they would be highly useful to further inform investigations on this issue.

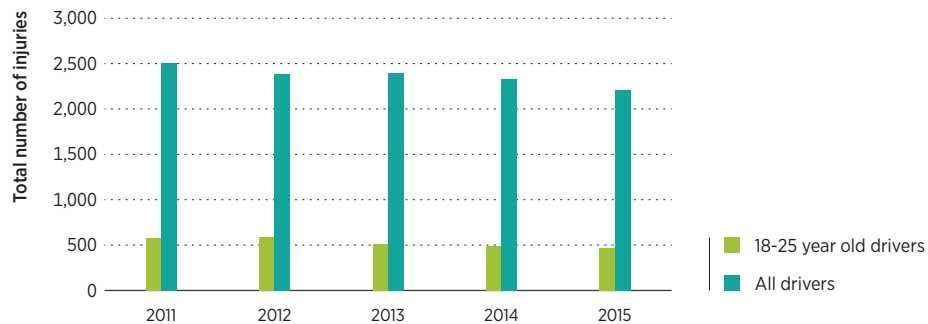
RECOMMENDATION 3: The Victorian Government investigate the role of young drivers in fatal and serious injury crashes, as well as the contributing factors to the decline in young driver fatalities across Australia. The results of this research be made publicly available.

Serious injuries

In Victoria, serious injury is defined as an admission to hospital, with the data collected by Victoria Police at the time of the injury crash and then compiled into the Victorian Police Traffic Incident System (TIS). The value of serious injury data lies in its use as a resource-measure. Because it does not differentiate between injury severity levels or provide information about the long-term consequences of road crash injuries, its accuracy as a measurement of road trauma is limited.²⁷⁸ On this basis, it is difficult to draw conclusions about road safety outcomes for young drivers using this data, other than to state that there has been an overall decline in reported serious injuries for 18 to 25 year-old drivers over the last five years. This is reflected in Figure 4.2.

²⁷⁷ Transport Accident Commission, *Submission*, no. 79, 27 May 2016, p. 14.

²⁷⁸ For further information on these and related issues with the Victorian serious injury definition, refer to: Road Safety Committee, *Inquiry into Serious Injury*, Parliament of Victoria, Melbourne, 2014.

Figure 4.2 Victorian serious injury data for 18 to 25 year-old drivers compared to all drivers²⁷⁹

4.1.2 Harm to others

Young drivers are not always the only casualties in their crashes. Compared to the broader population, they are more likely to be involved in crashes that lead to the death or serious injury of other road users. As stated in *Towards Zero 2016-2020: Victoria's Road Safety Strategy and Action Plan*, a quarter of the road toll results from crashes with young drivers under 25.²⁸⁰ Samantha Cockfield, Senior Manager of Road Safety at the Transport Accident Commission (TAC), advised the Committee that young drivers are typically at-fault in crashes:

We definitely have the data. Historically I know that would be true...generally the inexperience of young drivers, particularly 18 and 19-year-olds, means that they are making the mistakes that mean that they are at fault. You see it particularly in rear-enders; they actually are not very good at gap judgement, which often does not result in very serious injury, but they are nearly always at fault. In terms of what we call right-hand against crashes, or right-hand turns, again they are usually at fault. We will take it on notice, but my gut feeling is that historically that has been the case — that they would usually, in a multivehicle collision, be at fault.²⁸¹

The Committee notes that the involvement of young drivers in fatality and serious injury crashes is declining, with data from the Australian Road Deaths Database indicating that between 2008-2014, annual deaths involving a young road user aged 17 to 25 years decreased by 33.9 per cent. In comparison, deaths involving road users aged 65 years and older increased by 5.2 per cent.²⁸² As the data is not broken down according to specific age groups, it does not identify the extent to which these crashes involve young newly-licensed drivers.

Additional evidence provided to the Committee by VicRoads highlights the specific involvement of 18 year-old Victorian drivers in crashes that occurred in 2015, which resulted in the death or injury of the driver, in addition to the death or injury of passengers aged 18 years and younger:

²⁷⁹ VicRoads, 'Interactive Crashstats 2011-2016', viewed 8 March 2017, <www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/safety-and-road-rules/safety-statistics/crash-statistics>.

²⁸⁰ State Government of Victoria, *Towards Zero 2016/2020: Victoria's Road Safety Strategy & Action Plan*, Melbourne, 2016, p. 21.

²⁸¹ Samantha Cockfield, Senior Manager, Road Safety, Transport Accident Commission, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 August 2016, p. 47.

²⁸² Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics, *Road trauma Australia: 2015 statistical summary*, Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development, Canberra, 2015, pp. 1, 14-15.

- 28 February 2015: resulted in the injury of an 18 year-old driver and the death of a 17-year-old passenger
- 19 April 2015: resulted in the injury of an 18 year-old driver and the death of a 16-year-old passenger
- 30 May 2015: resulted in the death of an 18 year-old driver, and serious injuries to two 17 year-old passengers, one 16 year-old and one 15 year-old passenger
- 30 June 2015: resulted in the death of an 18 year-old driver and the death of two passengers aged 16 and 17
- 5 September 2015: resulted in the death of an 18 year-old driver and the serious injury of a 17 year-old passenger
- 30 November 2015: resulted in the serious injury of an 18 year-old driver, the death of a 15 year-old passenger and serious injuries to two 17 year-old passengers
- 29 December 2015: resulted in death of an 18 year-old driver and a 16 year-old passenger.²⁸³

The Committee notes that in three of these instances, the drivers were not complying with the probationary one (P1) licence requirement of carrying only one peer passenger. There is consistent evidence supporting peer passenger restrictions for young newly-licensed drivers, as the risk of crash increases with each peer aged passenger in the vehicle.²⁸⁴ The evidence provided by VicRoads further supports the need for tighter peer passenger restrictions on P1 drivers as they gain valuable independent driving experience in their first year of licensure. This, and the risk relating to night driving, are discussed further in chapter three. Other high risk crash factors for young drivers are discussed in the following section.

4.2 High risk crash factors

The reasons why some young people are more prone to taking risks than others are highly complex and multifaceted. As explained by Twisk and Colin, a driver's crash risk is influenced by the interaction of personal and environmental factors:

They involve a myriad of interacting factors, including physiological and emotional development, personality, social norms, the role of youth in society, individuals' socio-economic circumstances, impairments to capabilities, the driving task itself, and the type of driving that young, novice drivers often engage in.

²⁸³ Jennifer Thompson, *Supplementary evidence*, VicRoads, 28 July 2016.

²⁸⁴ Johnson, S and Jones, V, 'Adolescent development and risk of injury: using developmental science to improve interventions', *Injury Prevention*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2011, p. 51.

Certain personality types are particularly subject to high crash risk. Social norms, including peer pressure and the emphasis placed on rebellion in youth culture, affect driving style, as do the examples provided by role models. Alcohol, drugs, fatigue, emotions and in-vehicle distractions, such as mobile telephones, all impair a driver's abilities. Based on economic considerations, young people may also drive older vehicles with fewer safety features.²⁸⁵

In recent years, the distinction between the concepts of 'young driver problem' and the 'problem young driver' is better understood, as is their role in the over-representation of young drivers in road trauma data. The young problem driver refers to risks that arise from the inexperience and age of drivers, whereas the problem young driver refers to intentional risk taking, often associated with adolescence.²⁸⁶

The Committee also notes the reoccurring theme in the academic and inquiry-related evidence of the significant physical, cognitive and psychosocial changes that occur throughout adolescence, and the impact these have on the crash risk of young drivers.

Various risk factors were cited in submissions and public hearings as to why the probationary driving age should not be lowered to 17 in Victoria, with the most common including:

- brain development of young people
- age and experience
- intentional risk taking behaviours
- alcohol
- rural road trauma
- vehicle safety.

These factors are discussed in more detail below.

4.2.1 Brain development of young people

According to emerging behavioural neuroscience research, certain parts of the brain responsible for 'inhibiting impulses and weighing the consequences of decisions'²⁸⁷ are under development until the early- to mid-twenties. This research has arisen from the advent of magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), which provides non-invasive and unprecedented access to the anatomy and physiology of the living brain.²⁸⁸ Consequently, burgeoning neuroimaging studies have

²⁸⁵ Twisk, D and Colin, S, 'Trends in young driver risk and countermeasures in European countries', *Journal of Safety Research*, vol. 38, no. 2, 2007, p. 8.

²⁸⁶ Oxley, J, et al., *Understanding novice driver behaviour: Review of Literature*, Monash University Accident Research Centre, Monash Injury Research Institute, and University of Waikato, Clayton, 2014.

²⁸⁷ Twisk, D and Colin, S, 'Trends in young driver risk and countermeasures in European countries', *Journal of Safety Research*, vol. 38, no. 2, 2007, p. 8.

²⁸⁸ Giedd, J, *Adolescent Brain Maturation*, National Institute of Mental Health, USA, Maryland, 2010.

documented over the last decade the structural changes in the prefrontal lobe in young people at different ages, which according to some academics plays a key role in decision-making about risk. According to Johnson and Jones:

The frontal lobes support and facilitate functions such as regulating impulsivity, overriding emotional arousal, and anticipating consequences. Throughout adolescence, brain regions become increasingly interconnected, improving processing speed and efficiency, and better integrating prefrontal areas with other brain regions. This is thought to underlie the more efficient and competent regulation of cognitive processes that emerge with age. Although the links between changes in brain structure and behaviour remain speculative for many adolescent risk behaviours, immaturity in the prefrontal cortex (and, by extension lack of connectivity in the brain regions that support prefrontal functions) has been associated with the propensity for drug use and problem gambling in adolescence.²⁸⁹

The assertion that this ongoing brain maturation can impact a young person's driving ability and behaviour was commonly cited in submissions and public hearings to support the view that the probationary driving age should not be lowered to 17. For example, Robyn Seymour at VicRoads told the Committee:

There is also growing research looking at the behavioural neuroscience which talks about the frontal lobe and our young people and their development particularly around risk perception and impulse control and the fact that this really is not fully developed until the mid-20s. So a younger licensing age will mean that they have less capacity to manage that impulse control; their decision-making will not be as well developed as at an older licensing age.²⁹⁰

Similarly, Elizabeth Waller, Manager of Road Safety Strategy and Programs at the TAC advised in her presentation:

...young people can talk about what the risks are and what the consequences may be, but they cannot manage those yet. So there is a disconnect between the parts of the brain, about understanding one thing and then controlling the impulse for another. That is why we find that young men particularly — and it takes longer for men to actually develop that — are at greater risk when it comes to a whole range of behaviours, not just driving but it could also be with other things, whether exploring or sensation seeking. So it is trying to control those impulses. It has a very direct link into driving and into road safety, and we have very sound research that supports that.²⁹¹

In the context of safe driving, Associate Professor Teresa Senserrick of Transport and Road Safety Research at the University of New South Wales (UNSW TARS) explained:

Developmental factors, however, apply to all youth and particularly contribute to unintentional risks. During childhood, changes in the brain start to occur that strengthen neural connections. They allow quicker and more efficient travel of nerve impulses, as cognitive abilities become more localised to certain brain areas.

²⁸⁹ Johnson, S and Jones, V, 'Adolescent development and risk of injury: using developmental science to improve interventions', *Injury Prevention*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2011, p. 51.

²⁹⁰ Robyn Seymour, Director Vehicle and Road Use Policy, VicRoads, *Transcript of evidence*, 15 June 2016, p. 5.

²⁹¹ Elizabeth Waller, Manager, Strategy and Programs, Transport Accident Commission, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 August 2016, p. 40.

It is during middle adolescence – when new licensed driving typically begins – that this process reaches the frontal lobe of the brain. This area is associated with functions such as controlling impulses, overriding emotions and anticipating consequences – all extremely important for ensuring safe driving. This process continues into the early 20s.²⁹²

The Committee acknowledges the emerging and broad application of this theory to youth discourse affecting social, legislative, judicial and educational policy decisions. However, it is also aware of the existing scepticism surrounding the theory and in particular the over-reliance on neuroimaging findings to explain the complexity and ambiguity of human behaviour.²⁹³ In recognition of this issue, the Committee explored the area further with various witnesses, particularly in the context of whether 17 year-olds are predisposed to different behavioural attitudes or risks compared to 18 year-olds. In response, Dr Alexa Delbosc from the Institute of Transport Studies (ITS) at Monash University stated:

...brain maturation still underlies the difference between 17 and 18-year-olds. Until we can do a brain scan on everybody going for their drivers licence to know just how mature their brain is, unfortunately we have to make a call somewhere at an age. Of course all 17-year-olds are going to have different levels of brain maturation. One might actually be more mature than an 18-year-old at the macro level.²⁹⁴

Further, Professor Rebecca Ivers, Director of the Injury Division of the George Institute for Global Health advised:

The evidence shows...that for every year you get older you learn better to deal with hazards and risk and make judgements. Someone at 17 is less able to deal with a hazardous situation than someone at 18 just because of their brain development, let alone their driving experience. Then you have the benefit of another year of driving experience under restricted circumstances on their learner licence and another year of brain development, so an 18-year-old person is going to be doubly safer for a couple of reasons.²⁹⁵

In contrast, Professor Johanna Wyn, Director of the Youth Research Centre at the University of Melbourne stated:

I am aware of research that comes out of the technologies that scan brains that shows different patterns in different age young people, particularly young men...I have also read and read and read the literature around that, and I agree with the many people who say that is improbable. Yes, there is brain development occurring all the time. There is nothing magical about the 25th birthday of our young men and whatever birthday it is for the young women — I think it is maybe earlier. Those imaging technologies are being interpreted in particular ways. I have listened to what scientists say about that too. They say it is not such a clear relationship.

I would be taking any advice that talks about young brains being more prone to risk with a little bit of a grain of salt.²⁹⁶

292 Senserrick, T, 'Young driver crashes: the myths and facts', *The Conversation*, 1 December 2015, viewed 13 December 2016, <theconversation.com/young-driver-crashes-the-myths-and-facts-49877>.

293 Giedd, J, *Adolescent Brain Maturation*, National Institute of Mental Health, USA, Maryland, 2010.

294 Dr Alexa Delbosc, Institute of Transport Studies, Monash University, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 August 2016, p. 67.

295 Professor Rebecca Ivers, The George Institute for Global Health, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 October 2016, p. 282.

296 Professor Johanna Wyn, Director, Youth Research Centre, University of Melbourne, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 August 2016, p. 33.

In response to a similar question from the Committee, Georgie Ferrari, the Chief Executive Officer of the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic) acknowledged the brain development theory but questioned whether there was much difference between 17 and 18 year-olds, or that such development is nuanced in 12 month increments.²⁹⁷

The Committee also received evidence from Professor Judith Bessant from the School of Global, Urban and Social Studies at RMIT University who previously questioned the credibility of adolescent brain development theory in her 2008 article.²⁹⁸ In particular, she questioned the methodological problem of relying on data generated in a laboratory with low-stress testing environments and extrapolating that into real-world situations where mental functions are typically influenced by experience and emotions. Professor Bessant asserted that it remains unclear what conclusions, if any, can be drawn from these imaging studies.²⁹⁹ In her presentation to the Committee, Professor Bessant referred to the misinterpretation of neurological science for the purposes of this theory:

The latest story about young people and their development relates to neurological science, and my argument is that a lot of people are now using neurological science, which is a good science, badly; they are interpreting it badly. It is not the science that is bad; it is the way that it is being interpreted, typically not by neurological scientists but by psychologists or road traffic experts and other people whose field it is not. Therein lies the danger. So it is good science; it is just being used badly.³⁰⁰

Professor Bessant also wrote about the ethical questions arising from ‘scientism – not science’ in her article and the way it informs policy and practice. She argued that it is ill-advised to assume young people are a homogenous group who develop in the same ways and at the same stage regardless of their different social contexts.³⁰¹ In addition, applying the notion that adolescence is a uniformed age-based cohort to public policy should theoretically raise broader age-of-consent questions about the appropriateness of the current voting age, minimum legal drinking age, or the age that people can lawfully enter into marriages or join the armed forces.³⁰²

The Committee is not in a position to draw any conclusions about the credibility of the adolescent brain development theory but is of the view that it should be referred to as one of many potential explanations of why some young people are more prone to taking risks. The Committee also does not believe that this theory provides convincing evidence of a difference in the driving capacity or risks between 17 and 18 year-olds.

²⁹⁷ Georgie Ferrari, Chief Executive Officer, Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, *Transcript of evidence*, 25 August 2016, p. 115.

²⁹⁸ Bessant, J, ‘Hard wired for risk: neurological science, ‘the adolescent brain’ and developmental theory’, *Journal of Youth Studies*, vol. 11, no. 3, 2008.

²⁹⁹ Bessant, J, ‘Hard wired for risk: neurological science, ‘the adolescent brain’ and developmental theory’, *Journal of Youth Studies*, vol. 11, no. 3, 2008, p. 350.

³⁰⁰ Professor Judith Bessant, School of Global, Urban and Social Studies, RMIT University, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 August 2016, p. 54.

³⁰¹ Bessant, J, ‘Hard wired for risk: neurological science, ‘the adolescent brain’ and developmental theory’, *Journal of Youth Studies*, vol. 11, no. 3, 2008, p. 355.

³⁰² Bessant, J, ‘Hard wired for risk: neurological science, ‘the adolescent brain’ and developmental theory’, *Journal of Youth Studies*, vol. 11, no. 3, 2008, p. 55; Professor Judith Bessant, School of Global, Urban and Social Studies, RMIT University, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 August 2016, p. 358.

FINDING 7: The brain development theory does not provide convincing evidence of differing risk levels or safe driving capacity between 17 and 18 year-olds.

4.2.2 Age versus experience

Another key consideration to the discussion about the lowering the probationary driving age is the contributing factors of age and experience to the crash risk of young newly-licensed drivers. As noted in the joint submission of the Monash University Accident Research Centre (MUARC) and Monash ITS:

The high crash 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.³⁰³

While a few studies have attempted to disentangle the relationship of driver age and experience, the relative contributions have not been well established, as they are typically ‘confounded in the development of young people’.³⁰⁴ Evidence presented in submissions and during public hearings also placed differing levels of emphasis on each factor, as was also reflected in the above discussion about the brain development of young people.

In its submission, the TAC stated that the two factors of exposure and age-based risk will lead to higher levels of trauma if the licensing age is lowered. It acknowledged that experience is fundamental to safe driving, although it indicated that a lower licensing age is associated with an increase in risk independent of experience.³⁰⁵ One of the key studies that the TAC drew from to support this notion is the Forsyth research, a cohort study based on self-reported data from drivers at the end of their first, second and third years of driving. This study was also used by the TAC and VicRoads in their forecast modelling to estimate the likely impact of a reduction in the licensing age (see section 4.3.2).

Drawing on the study’s results, the TAC stated that drivers licensed at 18 had nine per cent fewer crashes in their first year of driving than those licensed at 17 years. In its reading of the study’s paper, the Committee notes that Forsyth et al also reported:

The analysis has demonstrated that the first few years of driving are crucial in determining the accident liability of new drivers – of all ages; accident liabilities fall by some 35-40 per cent due to experience alone in the first year of driving. Increasing age also results in a reduction in accidents – although the magnitude of this effect in the first few years of driving is considerably less than the effect of added experience.³⁰⁶

³⁰³ Dr Sharon Newnam, et al., *Submission*, no. 86, 30 May 2016.

³⁰⁴ McCartt, A, et al., ‘Effects of age and experience on young driver crashes: review of recent literature’, *Traffic Injury Prevention*, vol. 10, no. 3, 2009, p. 209.

³⁰⁵ Transport Accident Commission, *Submission*, no. 79, 27 May 2016, p. 18.

³⁰⁶ Forsyth, E, et al., *Cohort Study of Learner and Novice Drivers: Part 3, Accidents, Offences and Driving Experience in the First Three Years of Driving*, Transport Research Laboratory, Berkshire, 1995, p. 3.

Similarly, in a review of literature on the effects of age and experience on young driver crashes, McCartt et al concluded that the effects of experience were found to be stronger than the effects of age in all but one study.³⁰⁷ The review included the Forsyth et al study, and referred to the above finding, which showed that the positive effects of longer licensure exceeded those of age.³⁰⁸

This finding was also supported by some of the stakeholders who provided evidence to the Committee, including MUARC and Monash ITS who stated in their submission that ‘inexperience is, by far, the main contributing factor to crash and injury risk amongst young novice drivers’.³⁰⁹ Associate Professor Senserrick of UNSW TARS also referred to the issue of inexperience in her evidence to the Committee:

So the young person who is following the rules and is doing everything correctly can still be at higher risk just because they are not experienced enough...The more and more we drive, the more and more parts of driving become sort of automatic or less conscious, if you like. A new driver of any age does not have that yet. But any new driver is at highest risk of having a crash when they are first driving — in that first year. And so that first year is really quite crucial, and what age you start driving is quite crucial in increasing your risk when you first start to drive, because you really need that independent driving experience on the road to help to keep you safe. It is not that young people would be taking more risks...they are at risk because they do not have the experience.³¹⁰

On the issue of age, Associate Professor Senserrick also advised that there are many development influences that can affect a younger driver’s capacity to concentrate, including their fatigue levels and emotional disruptions that may impact how they react in stressful driving situations.³¹¹

Experience, and quality experience in particular, was also reinforced by Professor Bessant as essential to assisting young people develop good judgement and the necessary skills to effectively engage in certain activities, such as driving:

My response is that experience is the key thing...It is not necessarily age. By and large, young people have less experience because they are young, but by giving them greater experience and good-quality experience, then you are going to mitigate that issue...By excluding young people from various activities, whether it be driving or other kinds of activities as well that we might consider adult or too dangerous for them to participate in, we are preventing them from having experiences that will enable them to make good judgements, and young people by and large, if they are supported properly, make good judgements.³¹²

³⁰⁷ McCartt, A, et al., ‘Effects of age and experience on young driver crashes: review of recent literature’, *Traffic Injury Prevention*, vol. 10, no. 3, 2009, p. 218.

³⁰⁸ McCartt, A, et al., ‘Effects of age and experience on young driver crashes: review of recent literature’, *Traffic Injury Prevention*, vol. 10, no. 3, 2009, p. 216.

³⁰⁹ Dr Sharon Newnam, et al., *Submission*, no. 86, 30 May 2016.

³¹⁰ Associate Professor Teresa Senserrick, Transport and Road Safety (TARS) Research UNSW, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 October 2016, p. 270.

³¹¹ Associate Professor Teresa Senserrick, Transport and Road Safety (TARS) Research UNSW, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 October 2016, p. 270.

³¹² Professor Judith Bessant, School of Global, Urban and Social Studies, RMIT University, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 August 2016, p. 56.

The notion that safe drivers are made and not born is one that the Committee strongly agrees with. Driving is a highly complex task that involves operating a vehicle and making consistently good judgements. This reinforces the value of the Safe System approach, which aims to ensure that the road transport system is designed in a way that provides a relatively safe environment for young people to acquire and enhance new driving skills, regardless of their inexperience or tendency to engage in risky driving behaviours.³¹³ As discussed in chapter three, Victoria's GLS, and in particular, the 120 hour supervised driving requirement, is essential to providing young people with the opportunity to build on that driving experience in a safe environment. Also placing restrictions on young newly-licensed drivers, such as night time driving and peer passenger restrictions, allows them to build on their experience as independent drivers, before other risks relating to distractions and poor visibility are likely to be present.³¹⁴

FINDING 8: The Committee acknowledges the relevant and distinct effects of age and experience on the crash risk of young newly-licensed drivers, but is of the view that experience has a stronger effect than age. Quality experience is essential to ensuring the safety outcomes of young drivers.

4.2.3 Intentional risk taking

Intentional risk taking by young drivers is a contributing factor to their crash involvement, although there is increasing awareness that this type of driving is uncommon among young drivers in general. Behaviours associated with an increased risk of crashing include speeding, carrying multiple passengers, using mobile phones and texting while driving, drink driving and even driving unlicensed.³¹⁵ These intentional risk-taking behaviours are more closely aligned to the concept of the problem young driver. The evidence indicates that risky driving is one component of a risk-taking lifestyle for some young people. In its submission to the inquiry, the YACVic identified the following groups of young people who are more likely than others to take risks on the road:

- Young people who engage in risk-taking in other areas of their lives.
- Young people who experience social rewards (like being 'cheered on') for risky driving, and who are encouraged by other young people to take risks.
- Young people whose parents model risky driving.
- Young people who drive outside the license system – either without a license or with a cancelled license.³¹⁶

³¹³ Twisk, D, et al., 'Quantifying the influence of safe road systems and legal licensing age on road mortality among young adolescents: Steps towards system thinking', *Accident Analysis and Prevention*, vol. 74, 2015, p. 307.

³¹⁴ Associate Professor Teresa Senserrick, Transport and Road Safety (TARS) Research UNSW, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 October 2016, p. 272.

³¹⁵ Young Driver Factbase, 'Does risky driving behaviour increase young drivers' risk of crashing?', viewed 9 May 2016, <www.youngdriverfactbase.com/the-issues/behaviour1/>.

³¹⁶ Youth Affairs Council Victoria, *Submission*, no. 76, 27 May 2016, p. 16.

The DRIVE study, Australia's largest study of young drivers aged 17 to 24, investigated the relationship between risky driving behaviour, risk perception and risk of crash among drivers in NSW. While previous research had examined the role of either risk perception or risky driving behaviours in predicting crash risk, this study aimed to explore the association between these two factors and crash risk among a cohort of young newly-licensed drivers.³¹⁷ Results obtained through self-reporting found that risky driving was associated with a 50 per cent increased risk of crashes, and that the effect of risk perception, while an independent predictor of crashes, was weakened once risky driving was accounted for. A key finding of the study and an important consideration when developing targeted countermeasures was that actual behaviours of young drivers, rather than their perceptions or attitudes about safety, was a contributing factor to crashes.³¹⁸ Related to this is the growing recognition of the effectiveness of system-based countermeasures in protecting young and newly-licensed drivers, compared with traditional strategies that aim to modify behaviour or attitudes through education and publicity campaigns.³¹⁹

Road trauma data also highlights the role of drivers' sex in crash risk, supporting the notion of 'the young driver problem becoming a problem of the young male driver'.³²⁰ In 2015, 78 per cent of driver fatalities in the 18 to 25 age group in Victoria were male.³²¹ Similarly, 68 per cent of crash fatalities across Australia from 2010 to 2016 for drivers aged 17 and 18 years were male, compared to 32 per cent of female drivers.³²² VicRoads, in its submission, referred to the higher involvement of young males in fatal and serious injury crashes, as a consequence of their 'greater propensity to engage in deliberately risky driving relative to their female counterparts'.³²³

4.2.4 Alcohol

Alcohol represents a source of risk for young drivers. While they do not typically consume alcohol and drive to the same extent as other age groups, they are more likely to be involved in crashes when they do engage in such behaviour. Consuming even low levels of alcohol has been found to significantly increase crash and fatality risk for drivers up until 21 years, and at a slightly

317 Ivers, R, et al., 'Novice Drivers' Risky Driving Behavior, Risk Perception, and Crash Risk: Findings From the DRIVE Study', *American Journal of Public Health*, vol. 99, no. 9, 2009, p. 1639.

318 Professor Ivers, R, *Risky driving puts p-platers at high danger of crash*, Media release, The George Institute for Global Health Australia, 9 September 2009.

319 Twisk, D, et al., 'Quantifying the influence of safe road systems and legal licensing age on road mortality among young adolescents: Steps towards system thinking', *Accident Analysis and Prevention*, vol. 74, 2015, p. 312.

320 Twisk, D and Colin, S, 'Trends in young driver risk and countermeasures in European countries', *Journal of Safety Research*, vol. 38, no. 2, 2007, p. 7.

321 Transport Accident Commission, 'Young Driver Statistics', viewed 27 October 2016, <www.tac.vic.gov.au/road-safety/learning-to-drive/young-driver-statistics>.

322 Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics, 'Australian Road Deaths Database', viewed 7 February 2017, <bitre.gov.au/statistics/safety/fatal_road_crash_database.aspx>.

323 VicRoads, *Submission*, no. 91, 6 June 2016, p. 13.

lower but elevated risk up until the age of 29.³²⁴ In recognition of this, all Australian jurisdictions require probationary drivers to have zero blood alcohol concentration (BAC) levels when driving.

As part of the inquiry, the Committee was required under ToR 1(c) to review the impacts of separating the legal driving age and the legal drinking age. The legal drinking age in Australia is 18 years. Only in Victoria, is this also the minimum probationary driving age. In response to this ToR, many submitters supported moves to separate the two through introducing an earlier licensing age, mainly in order to reduce the temptation of young newly-licensed drivers to drink and drive. Jodie Cosham stated in her submission:

I can see advantages to this approach. Rather than being handed the keys to a car and access to a licensed venue at the same age, it can be staggered (and I say “licensed venue” because it would be naïve to say that people under 18 do not drink alcohol at home or outside of licensed venues). I can see the novelty and independence of having one’s licence will wear off by the time the legal drinking age is reached, as well as the tendency to take risks with one’s licence restrictions (passenger & BAC limits).³²⁵

Similarly, Dave Serpell advised in his presentation to the Committee that:

I think, and I know a lot of other people agree with me, that it would be a lot smarter to give Victorians a whole year on the road by themselves to mature, gain some experience and get used to driving without alcohol in their lives so that when they finally get the right to drink they will be sensible enough to know what is right and what is wrong in terms of driving responsibilities.³²⁶

According to the evidence received from the road safety agencies, including the TAC, VicRoads, Victoria Police and the Australasian College of Road Safety, the drinking age and driving age are already separated under the GLS due to the zero BAC requirements for all probationary drivers, accompanied with public awareness campaigns and strong enforcement of drink driving laws by Victoria Police. The drink driving penalties for first time offenders are detailed in Table 4.4. These penalties relate to all drivers, including those holding a learner permit and probationary drivers. Aside from these penalties, authorities have the power to immediately suspend a driver licence or learner permit in certain situations, such as when a probationary or learner driver has a BAC of 0.07 or more.³²⁷ There are also more severe penalties for second or subsequent offences.

³²⁴ Australasian College of Road Safety, *Submission*, no. 88, 30 May 2016, p. 8; Senserrick, T and Williams, A, *Summary of Literature of the Effective Components of Graduated Driver Licensing System*, Austroads, Sydney, 2015, p. 39.

³²⁵ Jodie Cosham, *Submission*, no. 70, 25 May 2016.

³²⁶ Dave Serpell, Individual Youth Advocate, Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, *Transcript of evidence*, 25 August 2016, p. 112.

³²⁷ VicRoads, ‘Drink-driving penalties’, viewed 1 February 2015, <www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/safety-and-road-rules/road-rules/penalties/drink-driving-penalties>.

Table 4.4 Penalties for first drink driving offences³²⁸

Offence description	Penalties
BAC zero to less than 0.05 (specific to learner permit holders or probationary drivers)	Drivers will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive a fine • Have their licence or permit cancelled • Be disqualified from driving for 3 months • Have an alcohol interlock for a minimum of 6 months
BAC zero to less than 0.05 (full licence holder subject to zero BAC requirement)	Drivers will receive: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A fine • 10 demerit points
BAC 0.05 to less than 0.07 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learner or probationary • full licence holder subject to zero BAC requirement • full licence holder less than 26 years old 	Drivers will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive a fine • Have their licence or permit cancelled • Be disqualified from driving for 6 months • Have an alcohol interlock for a minimum of 6 months
BAC 0.05 to less than 0.07 (full licence holder 26 years old or older and not subject to a zero BAC requirement)	Drivers will receive: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A fine • 10 demerit points
BAC 0.07 to less than 0.10 (all drivers)	Drivers will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive a fine • Have their licence or permit cancelled • Be disqualified from driving for 6 months • Have an alcohol interlock for a minimum of 6 months
BAC 0.10 to less than 0.15 (all drivers)	Drivers will need to go to court and will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive a fine • Have their licence or permit cancelled • Be disqualified from driving for 10-14 months • Have an alcohol interlock for a minimum of 6 months
BAC 0.15 or more (all drivers)	Drivers will need to go to court and will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive a fine • Have their licence or permit cancelled • Be disqualified from driving for a minimum of 15 months • Have an alcohol interlock for a minimum of 6 months

Compliance with this requirement is relatively good among probationary drivers, particularly those aged 18 years. VicRoads stated in its submission that between the period 2010 to 2014, the proportion of all drink driving offences committed by 18 to 25 year olds decreased from 29.4 per cent to 23 per cent.³²⁹ Similarly, the TAC's submission referred to survey research where 93 per cent of respondents aged 18 and 19 years reported that they did not drink drive in the last 12 months.³³⁰

³²⁸ VicRoads, 'Drink-driving penalties', viewed 1 February 2015, <www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/safety-and-road-rules/road-rules/penalties/drink-driving-penalties>.

³²⁹ VicRoads, *Submission*, no. 91, 6 June 2016, p. 30.

³³⁰ Transport Accident Commission, *Submission*, no. 79, 27 May 2016, p. 24.

Overall, there is widespread support among road safety agencies for the proposition that the zero BAC requirement for probationary drivers is effective in separating the two acts of drinking and driving.³³¹ International research, predominantly from the United States, reaffirms this stance with evidence showing that a zero tolerance law for drinking among younger drivers was associated with a 24.4 per cent reduction in young driver fatal crashes, compared with 18.9 per cent reduction associated with a minimum drinking age of 21 years. On this basis, it is reasonable to argue that the zero tolerance laws in Victoria are helping to keep young drivers safe on the roads.

The Committee agrees with this position and also notes that it is common for young people under 18 years to already have consumed alcohol, some regularly, before they are legally permitted to do so. The Committee acknowledges the broader societal issues arising from the misuse of alcohol, particularly among young people, although it does not believe that separating the drinking age and minimum probationary driving age will result in further road safety outcomes for young newly-licensed drivers.

FINDING 9: Separating the drinking age and minimum probationary driving age is unlikely to result in further road safety outcomes for young newly-licensed drivers.

4.2.5 Rural road trauma

Given the rural and regional focus in the inquiry's terms of reference, an important consideration for the Committee was the contributing factor of rural roads in young drivers' high crash risk. Young drivers from rural areas are over-represented in road trauma data due to various factors, including driving long distances, typically on poorer-quality roads, which when combined with higher travel speeds, leads to a greater risk of fatalities and/or serious injuries in the event of a crash. In 2015, of the 18 young drivers aged 18 to 20 years that were killed on Victorian roads, 14 of these fatalities occurred in the country.³³² In addition, VicRoads reported that the average crash involvement rate for rural young drivers between the period of 2010 to 2014 was 281 fatal and serious injury crashes per 100,000 population. This compared to 154 fatal and serious injury crashes for young drivers in urban areas, almost half the average rate for rural young drivers.³³³

The Committee notes that the rural crash risk is not specific to young drivers and is a significant contributing factor to the overall road toll in Victoria and Australia more broadly. According to John Meritt, Chief Executive Officer of VicRoads, Victorian fatality rates are four times higher on rural roads compared to urban roads, and in particular on high speed rural roads.³³⁴ While there is a perception

³³¹ Australasian College of Road Safety, *Submission*, no. 88, 30 May 2016; Senserrick, T and Williams, A, *Summary of Literature of the Effective Components of Graduated Driver Licensing System*, Austroads, Sydney, 2015; Transport Accident Commission, *Submission*, no. 79, 27 May 2016; VicRoads, *Submission*, no. 91, 6 June 2016.

³³² VicRoads, *2015 Victorian Road Trauma: Analysis of Fatalities and Serious Injuries*, Kew, 2016, p. 17.

³³³ VicRoads, *Submission*, no. 91, 6 June 2016, p. 12.

³³⁴ John Merritt, Chief Executive, VicRoads, *Transcript of evidence*, 15 June 2016, p. 4.

that urban drivers are at a higher risk of crashing on rural roads, the Committee received evidence asserting that it is often country people who die on country roads. Assistant Commissioner Doug Fryer of Victoria Police told the Committee:

In 2016 we know that the country roads continue to see so many more fatalities pro rata... On a population basis the risk of fatalities in the country is about four times that of the metro. Two out of three deaths on country roads are country people. We keep hearing that it is not country people dying on country roads. It is — two out of three... Why is that? Because country roads are more dangerous. We are not saying that they are better or worse drivers, but it is more dangerous driving in the country. Your default speed almost everywhere is 100 kilometres an hour, and if you make a minor mistake at 100, you are probably going to die.³³⁵

Further, Professor Ivers of the George Institute for Global Health advised the Committee that an added risk to driving on rural roads is that many people in rural and remote areas drive older vehicles with fewer safety features:

We also know that people in rural and remote areas, and particularly young people, are more likely to drive older cars, which means they have less safety features, which means not only are they more likely to be involved in a crash because of the safety of the car but if they are involved in a crash, they have got fewer safety features.³³⁶

From a Safe System perspective, the high crash risk for rural road users reinforces how each of the components of the road transport system – roads, vehicles, road users and speed – interact with one another and can potentially lead to devastating effects for users. There is broad consensus that creating safer roads will improve safety outcomes for everyone, whatever their age and driving behaviour.³³⁷ The Committee acknowledges the ongoing focus of the Victorian Government to enhance the quality of rural roads but notes there is still a long way to go before these roads, or at least regional highways, achieve a four or five-star safety rating. Samantha Cockfield from the TAC told the Committee that despite the TAC investing \$1.4 billion in improving Victorian roads, these road safety improvements take time:

We have got about 120 000 kilometres of roads. We are doing our absolute best to treat the highest volume and highest risk roads. So where most people travel most of the time, and where most of the risk is, is where we are starting in terms of treating the roads, but we have still got well over 100 000 kilometres of road that will not be treated with the best infrastructure in the near future.³³⁸

Ms Cockfield advised that until the majority of Victorian roads have the desired infrastructure, young drivers continue to be at a high risk of crashing. This, accompanied with an ageing vehicle fleet, makes it impossible for the TAC to support lowering the probationary driving age.³³⁹ Evidence provided by CARRS-Q also reinforced the risk for young drivers on rural roads, stating in its

³³⁵ Assistant Commissioner Doug Fryer, Road Policing, Victoria Police, *Transcript of evidence*, 25 August 2016, p. 89.

³³⁶ Professor Rebecca Ivers, The George Institute for Global Health, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 October 2016, p. 277.

³³⁷ Dr Alexa Delbosc, Institute of Transport Studies, Monash University, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 August 2016; Brian Negus, General Manager Public Policy, Royal Automobile Club of Victoria, *Transcript of evidence*, 15 June 2016.

³³⁸ Samantha Cockfield, Senior Manager, Road Safety, Transport Accident Commission, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 August 2016, p. 45.

³³⁹ Samantha Cockfield, Senior Manager, Road Safety, Transport Accident Commission, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 August 2016, p. 45.

submission that young people at the highest crash risk are those that become licensed quicker or earlier; and they are more likely to be male, and live in areas that have limited public transport options, particularly in rural areas.³⁴⁰ The Committee acknowledges these concerns but also notes that it is typically this cohort of young people who are likely to benefit from improved mobility. This again raises the question of how to balance safety and mobility, and in the context of this inquiry, how to address young driver risk without limiting their access to opportunities. This is discussed further in chapter five.

4.2.6 Vehicle safety

Young drivers are disproportionately more likely to drive vehicles with fewer safety features compared to the rest of the population. When purchasing a vehicle, young people buy what they can afford and generally focus on personal taste rather than safety features. This is particularly common among disadvantaged young people, in addition to low-income groups.³⁴¹ A study conducted for the Used Car Safety Ratings (USCR) resource investigated safety features of crashed vehicles based on police-reported crashes from five Australian states and New Zealand. It reported that compared to experienced drivers, young people were crashing in vehicles of poor crashworthiness regardless of the age of the vehicle.³⁴²

The vehicles that young people drive are typically roadworthy, although they often do not have features that offer a level of protection through either avoiding a crash or minimising physical harms when a crash occurs. These features, among others, include airbags, Auto Emergency Braking (AEB), blind spot detection, and Electronic Control Stability (ECS).³⁴³ Overall, these features allow vehicles to be more forgiving of simple errors in the event of a crash, or assist drivers to avoid crashes in the first place. John Merritt, the Chief Executive of VicRoads, informed the Committee that it is unusual for a young person to be involved in a fatal crash when they are in a modern vehicle. He could not recall such an incident in the reports from the last 12 months.³⁴⁴

The Committee also heard that the risks associated with driving older and less safe vehicles were compounded with other factors that contribute to higher crash risk of young drivers. Robyn Seymour at VicRoads told the Committee:

The other thing we know about young people, certainly in Victoria and in other jurisdictions in Australia, is that they tend to drive older cars, which means that the level of protection that is provided to them, if something goes wrong, by those vehicles is really reduced. So we have got a compounding of risk in terms of rural roads, the speeds they are travelling, their inexperience and the vehicles that they

³⁴⁰ Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety – Queensland (CARRS-Q), *Submission*, no. 78, 27 May 2016.

³⁴¹ Dr Alexa Delbosc, Institute of Transport Studies, Monash University, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 August 2016; Youth Affairs Council Victoria, *Submission*, no. 76, 27 May 2016.

³⁴² Oxley, J, et al., *Understanding novice driver behaviour: Review of Literature*, Monash University Accident Research Centre, Monash Injury Research Institute, and University of Waikato, Clayton, 2014.

³⁴³ Elizabeth Waller, Manager, Strategy and Programs, Transport Accident Commission, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 August 2016; John Merritt, Chief Executive, VicRoads, *Transcript of evidence*, 15 June 2016.

³⁴⁴ John Merritt, Chief Executive, VicRoads, *Transcript of evidence*, 15 June 2016, p. 9.

are driving in. So from a safe system approach it is everything that we are trying to manage in terms of reducing our risk and therefore the trauma that we see on our roads.³⁴⁵

Driving safer vehicles, and in particular accelerating demand for safer vehicles, is integral to the Safe System approach to road safety. According to Samantha Cockfield of the TAC, the average age of the vehicle fleet is around eleven years, with a 20-year turnaround period before modern and safer vehicles move their way through the road transport system.³⁴⁶ Given the time required to enhance road infrastructure, improving vehicle safety is likely to have a broader but immediate safety effect for road users, particularly young people. Enhancing vehicle safety among young drivers is addressed in chapter five.

4.3 Minimum probationary licensing age

4.3.1 Licensing age in international jurisdictions

The minimum probationary licensing age varies widely throughout the world, and also throughout the countries and sub-national jurisdictions that use a form of GLS.

In the United States (US), the minimum independent licensing age differs widely, ranging from 14 years 3 months to 17 years, the highest age, stipulated only in New Jersey. Overall, the US has a very high rate of young driver crashes, with those aged 16–19 involved in fatal crashes almost three times as frequently as older drivers.³⁴⁷ The higher licensing age is held up by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety as the exemplar, and it estimated that a change from the lowest minimum licensing age (14 years and 3 months in South Dakota) to 17 years would reduce the rate of fatal crashes involving 15 to 17 years old drivers by 32 per cent.³⁴⁸

In Canada, the minimum age for driving unsupervised (generally called the learner two or intermediate stage) ranges from 16 years to 17 years throughout the provinces. Raising the minimum age from 16 to 17 has been recommended by Traffic Injury Research Foundation, based on superior safety outcomes in Australia and other GLS jurisdictions.³⁴⁹

In New Zealand (NZ), the minimum probationary driving age is 16 years and 6 months, as the learner's permit can be obtained at 16 years and must be held for a minimum of six months. In 2005, NZ was rated as the worst-performing country

³⁴⁵ Robyn Seymour, Director Vehicle and Road Use Policy, VicRoads, *Transcript of evidence*, 15 June 2016, p. 6.

³⁴⁶ Samantha Cockfield, Senior Manager, Road Safety, Transport Accident Commission, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 August 2016, p. 45.

³⁴⁷ Australasian College of Road Safety, *Submission*, no. 88, 30 May 2016, p. 9.

³⁴⁸ Insurance Institute for Highway Safety: Highway Loss Data Institute, 'Teenagers: Q&As', viewed 20 January 2017, <www.iihs.org/iihs/topics/t/teenagers/qanda#cite-text-1-4>; Mayhew, D, et al., *A New GDL Framework: Evidence Base to Integrate Novice Driver Strategies*, Traffic Injury Research Foundation, Ottawa, 2014..

³⁴⁹ Mayhew, D, et al., *A New GDL Framework: Evidence Base to Integrate Novice Driver Strategies*, Traffic Injury Research Foundation, Ottawa, 2014.

in the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) for young drivers between 15 to 17. The licensing age was raised from 15 in 2011, in response to the high fatality rate (21 per 100,000 15–24 year olds in 2009).³⁵⁰

In Europe, GLS are not as common. Despite this, the safety outcomes of high-income European countries are typically comparable to those in Australia. This can be attributed to a range of factors, including a far younger fleet of cars with more standard safety features,³⁵¹ a larger population, better roads and shorter driving distances.

The majority of European countries have a minimum independent driving age of 18, and European Union (EU) guidelines stipulate that driving should not commence before 18.³⁵² The EU countries with a minimum age of 18 include: Luxembourg, Estonia, France, Italy, Netherlands, Germany, Sweden, Bulgaria. Those with an age of 17 include Ireland and the United Kingdom.³⁵³

4.3.2 Link between licensing age and the road toll

According to many groups that provided evidence to the Committee, lowering the probationary driving age to 17 will result in increased road trauma for both young drivers and the broader community.³⁵⁴ As stated by Professor Ivers of the George Institute for Global Health:

I am not talking about it as hugely significant. I am saying that people will die, and I consider that to be significant. So if you reduce the age, people are going to die as a result of that. You need to be in no doubt about that. That is going to happen. You are also going to have hundreds of people who have serious injuries, who are going to be disabled for the rest of their lives. There is no doubt about that, so you need to be very clear about that when you are making recommendations.³⁵⁵

The predicted rise in road trauma is argued to be a consequence both of increased exposure of more young newly-licensed drivers on the road, as well as higher risks associated with driving independently at a younger age.³⁵⁶ The Committee was

³⁵⁰ NZ Transport Agency, 'Restricted licence', viewed 13 February 2017, <www.nzta.govt.nz/driver-licences/getting-a-licence/licences-by-vehicle-type/cars/restricted-licence-2/>.

³⁵¹ Brian Negus, General Manager Public Policy, Royal Automobile Club of Victoria, *Transcript of evidence*, 15 June 2016, p. 26.

³⁵² Australasian College of Road Safety, *Submission*, no. 88, 30 May 2016.

³⁵³ See europa.eu, 'Your Europe: Getting a driving licence in the EU', viewed 13 February 2017, <europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/vehicles/driving-licence/get-driving-licence/index_en.htm#!>.

³⁵⁴ Australasian College of Road Safety, *Submission*, no. 88, 30 May 2016; Australian Driver Trainers Association (Victoria) Inc., *Submission*, no. 89, 30 May 2016; Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety – Queensland (CARRS-Q), *Submission*, no. 78, 27 May 2016; Dr Sharon Newnam, et al., *Submission*, no. 86, 30 May 2016; Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, *Submission*, no. 77, 27 May 2016; Royal Automobile Club of Victoria Ltd, *Submission*, no. 40, 18 May 2016; Transport Accident Commission, *Submission*, no. 79, 27 May 2016; Transport and Road Safety (TARS) Research UNSW, *Submission*, no. 75, 27 May 2016; VicRoads, *Submission*, no. 91, 6 June 2016; Victoria Police, *Submission*, no. 101, 4 July 2016.

³⁵⁵ Professor Rebecca Ivers, The George Institute for Global Health, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 October 2016, p. 280.

³⁵⁶ Royal Automobile Club of Victoria Ltd, *Submission*, no. 40, 18 May 2016; Transport and Road Safety (TARS) Research UNSW, *Submission*, no. 75, 27 May 2016.

also advised that a reduction in the amount of time available to accrue 120 hours of supervised experience would contribute to a higher crash risk for 17 year-old probationary drivers.³⁵⁷

For the purposes of this inquiry, VicRoads and the TAC conducted modelling to determine the road trauma forecasts associated with a lowered driving age. According to VicRoads, lowering the licensing age from 18 years to 17 years in Victoria would result in an additional ten fatalities each year, an additional 241 serious injuries each year, and an additional 714 minor injuries each year.³⁵⁸ The TAC presented similar findings to the Committee.³⁵⁹ An explanation of the approach used to determine the forecasts is provided in Appendix 4.

The Committee acknowledges the evidence that identifies age as an independent crash risk, however, it questions the use of the ten per cent higher crash risk for 17 year-olds in the VicRoads and TAC forecasts, which is based on the Forsyth et al study.³⁶⁰ The Committee has some concerns with the applicability of this study's findings to Victoria's current licensing context due to the age of the study³⁶¹ and the likely high exposure of newly-licensed drivers to certain crash risk factors at the time it was conducted. For example, the study took place in the United Kingdom at a time when there was no specific licensing regime for new drivers. Rather, obtaining a licence simply required passing a basic written exam without a requirement to acquire a certain level of driving experience. Further, infrastructure and vehicle safety have undoubtedly improved significantly since the study, therefore reducing the number and severity of crashes from then to now. The study's findings were also based on self-reported data with no link to official crash statistics.

FINDING 10: There is insufficient evidence or current data that allows authorities to quantify the impact of lowering the probationary driving age from 18 to 17 on fatalities and serious injuries on Victorian roads.

³⁵⁷ Australasian College of Road Safety, *Submission*, no. 88, 30 May 2016; Dr Sharon Newnam, et al., *Submission*, no. 86, 30 May 2016.

³⁵⁸ VicRoads, *Submission*, no. 91, 6 June 2016, p. 17.

³⁵⁹ Transport Accident Commission, *Submission*, no. 79, 27 May 2016, p. 21.

³⁶⁰ Forsyth, E, et al., *Cohort Study of Learner and Novice Drivers: Part 3, Accidents, Offences and Driving Experience in the First Three Years of Driving*, Transport Research Laboratory, Berkshire, 1995.

³⁶¹ While the Forsyth et al study was published in 1995, it was conducted from 1987 to 1989.

5

Improving young people's access to opportunities through transport mobility

A reoccurring theme throughout the inquiry was that mobility is vital to enhance access to opportunities. The purpose of chapter five is to explore ways to support young people to access employment, training, education and social opportunities. This addresses Term of Reference (3), which required the Committee to investigate strategies to remove barriers for people of non-driving age to access employment, study and training.

The Committee proposes various initiatives to improve the transport mobility of young people living in non-urban areas, and also to minimise the crash risks of young and newly-licensed drivers. These recommendations are informed by the issues of accessibility as identified in chapter two, combined with the road safety concerns outlined in chapter four.

5.1 Licensing

5.1.1 Lowering the Victorian probationary driving age

A key question of this inquiry is whether lowering the probationary driving age to 17 will minimise the risk of young people experiencing transport disadvantage in non-urban areas in Victoria. The Austroads review of literature on effective components of Australian graduated licensing schemes (GLS) indicated that when considering the appropriate minimum probationary driving age, jurisdictions should think beyond road trauma implications and also consider the potential impact on employment opportunities.³⁶² While Austroads proposed this in the specific context of jurisdictions proposing to increase the driving age from 17 to 18, for the purposes of this inquiry, the Committee deliberated on how to achieve a balance between mobility and road safety with the reverse proposition of lowering the driving age.

The Committee acknowledges the safety concerns expressed by the various road safety agencies about the possible increase in road trauma that may result from a probationary licensing age of 17. However, the Committee also refers to the road trauma data in the other jurisdictions, which reflects low fatality rates for 17 year-old drivers. The Committee does not see any reason why Victoria would not experience similarly low rates. The Committee also notes the decline in young driver fatalities over the last ten years, in addition to the decline in the crash involvement of young drivers resulting in the death or serious injury of other

³⁶² Senserrick, T and Williams, A, *Summary of Literature of the Effective Components of Graduated Driver Licensing System*, Austroads, Sydney, 2015, p. 32.

road users. A contributing factor to these declines is the effectiveness of the GLS. Victoria's GLS, in particular, is deemed world-leading and it will be strengthened further with the Committee's recommendations to introduce restrictions on night-driving and peer passengers for probationary drivers in their first year of licensure.

Throughout the Inquiry, the Committee received submissions from many community members supporting the proposition to lower the licensing age from 18 to 17.³⁶³ This included from young people themselves, many from rural areas who were struggling to travel independently in their local towns, and others who were at risk of becoming isolated and disconnected from the broader community due to a lack of employment opportunities. The Committee also heard that without a licence, some employers did not view young people as potential employees, particularly for apprenticeships.³⁶⁴ A key concern for the Committee was the long-term impact on young people who do not have viable strategies to help them grow as individuals and who feel 'stuck' with no real choices or opportunities. As explained by the President of the Victorian Farmer's Federation, Peter Tuohey:

Against a backdrop of rising youth mental health issues and unemployment across the State, it is important to recognise how isolation is limiting choice and stimulation in rural Victoria, and contributing to these challenges.

Reducing the probationary driving age to seventeen would be one step towards ensuring that young people in rural communities are able to engage in what these communities have to offer.³⁶⁵

On the other hand, the Committee was told that the capacity to drive at 17 would facilitate better uptake of employment opportunities for young people, enhance employability and job retention, encourage social mobility and create stronger communities, as well as alleviate pressures on family and other support networks. Further, the importance of providing young people with quality experiences was a reoccurring theme throughout the inquiry and the notion that these experiences, whether they relate to driving, employment and other various activities,

³⁶³ Bryce Pace, Student, Brauer College, *Transcript of evidence*, 8 September 2016; Cael Green, *Submission*, no. 72, 26 May 2016; Charlie Lucas, *Submission*, no. 100, 9 June 2016; Courtney Fenton, *Submission*, no. 98, 9 June 2016; Dave Serpell, Individual Youth Advocate, Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, *Transcript of evidence*, 25 August 2016; Dylan Gravett, *Submission*, no. 96, 9 June 2016; Grace McKerral, *Submission*, no. 4, 4 April 2016; Jack Christiansen, *Submission*, no. 48, 18 May 2016; Jack Hoogen, *Submission*, no. 46, 18 May 2016; Keira Schaefer, *Submission*, no. 5, 5 April 2016; Kristy Gibson-Emmins, Student, Wodonga Senior Secondary College, *Transcript of evidence*, 4 October 2016; Max Meyer, *Submission*, no. 71, 25 May 2016; Maxwell Tilley, *Submission*, no. 41, 18 May 2016; Nick Young, *Submission*, no. 39, 16 May 2016; Nicole Bradley, *Submission*, no. 19, 19 April 2016; Patrick Johnstone, *Submission*, no. 10, 8 April 2016; Shania Hallyburton, Student, Brauer College, *Transcript of evidence*, 8 September 2016; Shaquile Singh, Student, Wodonga Senior Secondary College, *Transcript of evidence*, 4 October 2016; Taj Merrett, *Submission*, no. 95, 9 June 2016; Tate Canty, *Submission*, no. 99, 9 June 2016; Taylah Darmanin, *Submission*, no. 35, 10 May 2016; Thomas Pascoe, Student, Wodonga Senior Secondary College, *Transcript of evidence*, 4 October 2016; William Hornstra, *Submission*, no. 68, 25 May 2016; Zharia Lawlor, *Submission*, no. 97, 9 June 2016.

³⁶⁴ Claire Rasmussen, Director, VET Practice, FedUni TAFE, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 September 2016; Robert Hale, *Submission*, no. 37, 13 May 2016; Sam Trethewey, Chair, Young Agribusiness Professionals, Victorian Farmers Federation, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 September 2016.

³⁶⁵ Victorian Farmers Federation, *Submission*, no. 64, 24 May 2016.

encourages them to learn and make good judgements. As stated by Professor Bessant from RMIT University, 'young people by and large, if they are supported properly, make good judgements'.³⁶⁶

RECOMMENDATION 4: The Victorian Government lower the minimum probationary driving age to 17.

The Committee is also aware that focussing only on licensing to address transport disadvantage is unlikely to have the desired effect for some young people who experience pervasive disadvantage in other areas of their life. As explained by the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic):

Over a quarter of young people without a license said that they had never learned to drive or were still learning. For some people, this is clearly a personal preference. But answers like 'too difficult', 'too expensive', or 'afraid of driving' can encompass (and conceal) real forms of inequality. Some young people lack the money to pay for driving lessons, a car, petrol and insurance. Others do not have a licensed adult who can support them to complete 120 hours of driving for their learner permit period – for example, if the young person is living away from their family, if their parent has a mental illness or is not licensed to drive in Australia, or if they have no family car. Moreover, for some young people with disabilities or mental/physical health problems, independent driving may not be possible regardless of their age.³⁶⁷

The Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL) made a similar point in its submission, stating that 'the age at which the driving licence might be obtained is immaterial where no vehicle is available to the young jobseeker or post-secondary student'.³⁶⁸ On this basis, the Committee believes it is essential that the Victorian Government consider other ways to address issues of access for young people in non-urban areas that is likely to have a broader positive effect. Investing in public and community transport initiatives, such as ridesharing and better utilisation of the School Bus Program, would contribute to improved transport mobility for young people of non-driving age and those with limited access to private transport options. These options are discussed throughout this chapter.

5.1.2 Exemption to the minimum probationary driving age

If the Victorian Government does not agree with the Committee's recommendation to lower the probationary driving age to 17, the Committee is strongly of the view that the Government should offer an exemption process that allows young people to apply for a probationary licence at 17 years based on circumstances relating to work, study and training. This may involve applicants providing evidence of an employment offer or acceptance into an education course or training program. Applicants would also still be required to complete their 120 hours of supervised driving practice.

³⁶⁶ Professor Judith Bessant, School of Global, Urban and Social Studies, RMIT University, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 August 2016, p. 56.

³⁶⁷ Youth Affairs Council Victoria, *Submission*, no. 76, 27 May 2016, p. 8.

³⁶⁸ Brotherhood of St Laurence, *Submission*, no. 90, 31 May 2016, p. 11.

As discussed in chapter three, this type of exemption is available in Queensland where a person may apply for a provisional licence prior to 17 years if they can demonstrate that they have a special need for a licence, such as for employment or education, or to access medical treatment for themselves or a family member. It must also be proven that no other transport is reasonably available and that refusal of the application will cause severe hardship to the applicant or their family. According to the Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads, applications are granted only in exceptional circumstances. In 2014, 72 applications were received and one was approved. In 2015, 43 applications were received and one was approved.³⁶⁹

In her evidence to the Committee, Associate Professor Teresa Senserrick from the Transport and Safety Research at the University of New South Wales proposed the introduction of 'extraordinary licences' for 17 year-olds if existing barriers to employment, study and training warrant them driving independently.³⁷⁰ She also advised the Committee:

There are a lot of sensitivities because people are worried about having systems with exemptions, which also make[s] people reluctant to make these big changes. I think if we can have better education and understanding around that it is obvious that one system cannot be all things to all people. But if we know this is going to be safer for the majority of young people and all of us who share the road with them, we should be able to stride towards strengthening the system that way, with support services to help those that would otherwise be disadvantaged.³⁷¹

As part of its investigations, the Committee was told by some stakeholders that an exemption process may create a layer of administrative complexity to the licensing system.³⁷² The Committee notes, however, that Victoria's licensing system has a number of existing exemptions, including one to the 120 hour supervised driving requirement if the nature of the applicant's 'employment, education or family circumstances would mean that [the requirement] would cause undue hardship'.³⁷³ As an exemption to the minimum probationary driving age would have similar, if not the same, eligibility criteria, the process has already been established, thereby reducing concerns about complexity. In addition, the Queensland exemption, while granted infrequently, is currently in operation and the Department of Transport and Main Roads would have valuable insight into the threshold criteria for approving exemptions, in addition to its enforcement of the exemption.

Naomi Kinsella, representing the Law Institute of Victoria's Young Lawyers Law Reform Committee, told the Committee that an exemption process may not benefit young people who need a probationary licence to seek or

³⁶⁹ Department of Transport and Main Roads Queensland, *Submission*, no. 38, 16 May 2016.

³⁷⁰ Transport and Road Safety (TARS) Research UNSW, *Submission*, no. 75, 27 May 2016, p. 4.

³⁷¹ Associate Professor Teresa Senserrick, Transport and Road Safety (TARS) Research UNSW, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 October 2016, p. 275.

³⁷² Michael Byrne, Institute of Transport Studies, Monash University, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 August 2016; Naomi Kinsella, Law Institute of Victoria (LIV) Young Lawyers, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 October 2016; Tony Robinson, Senior Manager, Financial Inclusion, Brotherhood of St Laurence, *Transcript of evidence*, 25 August 2016.

³⁷³ VicRoads, 'Licence exemptions', viewed 20 January 2017, <www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/licences/your-ps/get-your-ps/licence-exemptions>.

secure employment, if they can only apply for the exemption once they have employment. As noted earlier, an exemption system would also still require that learner drivers accrue 120 hours of supervised driving practice before progressing to a probationary licence. This would require foresight and planning on behalf of the young person wishing to apply for an exemption as soon as they turn 17. While this might be challenging, it is in the safety interests of young people to gain the appropriate amount of driving experience before they apply for their licence through the exemption process. The Committee is of the view that this is achievable for some young people residing in rural and regional areas, with many indicating to the Committee during public hearings that they had completed their 120 hours within 12 months of obtaining their learner permit at 16 years.³⁷⁴

RECOMMENDATION 5: If the Victorian Government does not lower the probationary driving age to 17, it should introduce an exemption process into the *Road Safety Act 1986* that allows young people to apply for a probationary licence at 17 years based on grounds of undue hardship.

5.1.3 Supporting young people to become safe, independent drivers

Supervised driving hours

As discussed in chapter two, the L2P Program is a community-based program that plays an important role in assisting learner drivers under the age of 21 to obtain their probationary licence. In particular, the program targets young people who 'find it difficult to meet the mandated 120 hours of driving practice due to family, economic or other circumstances'.³⁷⁵ Many stakeholders expressed their strong support for the program but identified limitations with its funding model and eligibility criteria which adversely affect the program's reach and its capacity to assist young people obtain their licence in a reasonable timeframe.

The nature of L2P program's funding is that each program receives \$1900 for every student to cover program costs, such as administration, driving lessons, volunteer matching and management, insurance and other vehicle costs. The Committee was told that programs also raise additional funds and source sponsorships to effectively administer each program. Often programs seek community support for vehicles or alternatively, vehicles are donated or loaned from local councils. Geoff Sharp, the Chief Executive Officer of United Way Ballarat, the organisation responsible for administering the L2P program in Ballarat, advised the Committee of the various program costs:

³⁷⁴ Amanda Groux, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 September 2016, p. 134; Dave Serpell, Individual Youth Advocate, Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, *Transcript of evidence*, 25 August 2016, p. 118; Jack Beer, Student, Wodonga Senior Secondary College, *Transcript of evidence*, 4 October 2016, p. 232; Jacob Heard, Student, Ballarat and Queens Anglican Grammar School, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 September 2016, p. 173; Leah Purtell, Student, Ballarat and Queens Anglican Grammar School, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 September 2016, p. 173; Meg Brennan, Student, Ballarat and Queens Anglican Grammar School, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 September 2016, p. 173; Shaquille Singh, Student, Wodonga Senior Secondary College, *Transcript of evidence*, 4 October 2016, p. 235; Wendy Young, *Transcript of evidence*, 8 September 2016, p. 190.

³⁷⁵ VicRoads, *Submission*, no. 91, 6 June 2016, p. 40.

The full program I think is \$1900 per person. That is what it costs us to actually run the program, and then we divide that up into thresholds based on the number of hours that they are going to need in the vehicle. The first part of the program is the most expensive. That is where you are doing the matches and you do the interaction. They have up to five lessons with a professional driving instructor to make sure they can control the vehicle before they get in with the volunteers. That is the expensive end of the program. That is also where most of the things happen. Then you have the second period, which just tends to be about driving, so your costs are lower. Then at the end is a much more intensive period again, so the costs are higher. We just work that out on the basis of hours over that 18-month period.³⁷⁶

The Committee heard from witnesses that the L2P program is in high demand by young people, resulting in waiting lists of up to 12 months in some areas.³⁷⁷ Further, the capacity of the programs to meet the individual needs of participating learner drivers often presents difficulties due to time constraints, stretched resources, limited volunteer availability and a high number of participants. The BSL referred in its submission to the challenge of the Hume L2P program to assist young people from its Kangan Youth Foyer, an integrated learning and accommodation centre for young people aged 16 to 24 years:

The Hume L2P program has generously allotted two mentor drivers to exclusively mentor Foyer students. However, considering nine students need to gain 120 hours each (all are currently under 10 hours) it is in the region of 1,000 hours of mentor time to get to a point of qualifying for P plates. It will take two mentors years to make up these numbers.³⁷⁸

The BSL also reported that recruiting volunteer mentors can be difficult, with the Hume L2P struggling to maintain enough volunteers to make use of its second vehicle.³⁷⁹ Mr Sharp from United Way Ballarat indicated that its program has an eight month waiting list, but unlike the Hume program, it also has a waiting list for volunteers.³⁸⁰

The BSL highlighted the value in accelerating the stream of learning for some participants, particularly as a way to improve their employability and it recommended that the Victorian Government boost funding across the State to 'speed up the rate at which learner drivers can progress through their mandated driving hours'.³⁸¹ Geoff Sharp and Deon Cameron, the L2P Coordinator for the Warrnambool City Council also shared this view but they advised of the difficulty in achieving this under the existing funding model. Deon Cameron told the Committee it costs considerably more financially to move learner drivers faster through the program.³⁸² Geoff Sharp suggested that funding be based on individual learners and their needs, instead of on a place in the program.³⁸³

³⁷⁶ Geoff Sharp, Chief Executive Officer, United Way Ballarat, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 September 2016, p. 165.

³⁷⁷ Youth Affairs Council Victoria, *Submission*, no. 76, 27 May 2016, p. 24.

³⁷⁸ Brotherhood of St Laurence, *Submission*, no. 90, 31 May 2016, p. 8.

³⁷⁹ Brotherhood of St Laurence, *Submission*, no. 90, 31 May 2016, p. 8.

³⁸⁰ Geoff Sharp, Chief Executive Officer, United Way Ballarat, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 September 2016, pp. 160, 166.

³⁸¹ Brotherhood of St Laurence, *Submission*, no. 90, 31 May 2016, p. 8.

³⁸² Deon Cameron, L2P Coordinator, Warrnambool City Council, *Transcript of evidence*, 8 September 2016, p. 200.

³⁸³ Geoff Sharp, Chief Executive Officer, United Way Ballarat, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 September 2016, p. 166.

Another key concern raised by stakeholders is the 21 year-old cut-off age for eligibility in the program, with reports of young people aged 21 years and over approaching L2P programs for help.³⁸⁴ Geoff Sharp told the Committee that the Ballarat program receives requests from 20 year-olds for assistance, however, they are ineligible for support due to them turning 21 while on the waiting list.³⁸⁵ Affordable options for young people aged over 21 years to learn how to drive are almost non-existent, but yet some young people do not have appropriate support and require assistance to become safe and responsible drivers. Deon Cameron reiterated the need for a similar program for people between 21 and 30 years:

There is a really strong need for some sort of a program for 21 to 30-year-olds; we do have a lot of unlicensed drivers within that bracket. Then there are even more mature drivers or people that would fall outside of that age bracket as well that do not have licences. In employment services I encountered that all the time. It was a really common thing. It is actually easier to work towards getting your probationary drivers licence before the age of 21 with programs like this and accessibility to services to help than it is over the age of 21.³⁸⁶

As advised by Dr Jessie Mitchell, the Policy Manager at the YACVic, the need for such support is particularly pertinent for young people living in areas with high youth unemployment and car dependency.³⁸⁷

Extending the age eligibility of the L2P programs may also reduce the risk of unlicensed driving. According to the Austroads report, *Developing Measures to Reduce Unlicensed Driving*, people in rural and remote locations and with a lower socioeconomic status are over-represented in unlicensed driving rates, many of whom have limited support to become licensed:

...they often face challenges in gaining access to appropriate, roadworthy, registered vehicles, and to appropriate supervising drivers willing and able to fulfil the minimum hours of supervised driving requirements that are a common element of modern graduated driver licensing schemes.³⁸⁸

Austroads recommended greater coordination of programs to encourage licensing to disadvantaged groups.

The Committee believes there is merit in the TAC and VicRoads reviewing the L2P program, and in particular the existing funding model to determine whether it allows individual programs to allocate funds effectively and according to the need of individual participants, in addition to whether it is necessary to increase funding levels to meet current demand. The review should also explore the value in extending the age eligibility of the program to 25 years, based on levels of demand from people aged 21 to 25, the broader economic and social benefits, and a potential reduced risk of unlicensed driving.

³⁸⁴ Brotherhood of St Laurence, Submission, no. 90, 31 May 2016; Deon Cameron, L2P Coordinator, Warrnambool City Council, *Transcript of evidence*, 8 September 2016; Geoff Sharp, Chief Executive Officer, United Way Ballarat, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 September 2016; Youth Affairs Council Victoria, Submission, no. 76, 27 May 2016.

³⁸⁵ Geoff Sharp, Chief Executive Officer, United Way Ballarat, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 September 2016, p. 161.

³⁸⁶ Deon Cameron, L2P Coordinator, Warrnambool City Council, *Transcript of evidence*, 8 September 2016, p. 206.

³⁸⁷ Dr Jessie Mitchell, Policy Manager, Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, *Transcript of evidence*, 25 August 2016, p. 111.

³⁸⁸ Baldock, M, et al., *Austroads Research Report: Developing Measures to Reduce Unlicensed Driving*, Centre for Automotive Safety Research, The University of Adelaide, Sydney, 2013, p. 5.

RECOMMENDATION 6: The Transport Accident Commission and VicRoads review the L2P driver training program and consider whether the existing funding model, in addition to the program eligibility criteria, allows individual programs to effectively meet identified needs.

Supporting young people to become better drivers

As well as considering ways to support the acquisition of 120 hour supervised driving for learner drivers, the Committee considered strategies to assist newly-licensed drivers develop broader 'soft' driving skills. Aside from the practical, physical abilities required, critical skills for early driving include developing good judgment and intuition, as well as understanding risk and how to manage it. Two of the ideas explored by the Committee were greater support from and for parents as potential driving supervisors, and more structured driver education for young people.

The Committee heard support for further resources being dedicated to school- and community-based education programs to promote good decision making among younger drivers.³⁸⁹ Such programs would be intended to complement existing skills-based training.

The Committee notes with approval the Victorian Government's Young Driver Safety package, a series of education, training and incentive initiatives designed to reduce young driver crashes. One initiative is the recent announcement of a permanent Road Safety Education Complex at Melbourne Museum in Carlton, designed to 'help students and the wider community understand their own vulnerability and the choices they need to make to stay safe on the roads'.³⁹⁰ This is in addition to the Practical Safe Driving Program, which will soon be available to all year 10 students, and will comprise in-classroom and in-vehicle components.³⁹¹

The Committee is also aware of the collaboration between the Victorian and NSW road safety agencies on the large-scale P Drivers Project, which aims to measure the 'effects of best-practice approaches to the training and development of novice drivers'.³⁹² The project compares a large sample of young drivers participating in a 15 month program of workshops, education and online support, with a control group of young drivers not exposed to the training and development. The Committee looks forward to seeing the outcomes of this project. It believes that ongoing support for newly-licensed drivers, combined with the initiatives in the Young Driver Safety package and the existing GLS, are an important suite of road safety initiatives to support young people.

³⁸⁹ Aicha Bah, Jana Boden, Emma O'Bree, Griffith University Law School Students, *Submission*, no. 85, 30 May 2016; Senserrick, T and Williams, A, *Summary of Literature of the Effective Components of Graduated Driver Licensing System*, Austroads, Sydney, 2015.

³⁹⁰ Minister for Roads and Road Safety, *Supporting Young Drivers To Be Safer Drivers*, Media release, State Government of Victoria, Melbourne, 1 February 2016.

³⁹¹ Towards Zero, 'Safe People: Young Drivers', viewed 28 February 2017, <www.towardszero.vic.gov.au/safe-people/road-users/young-drivers>.

³⁹² P Drivers Project, 'Welcome to the P Drivers Project', viewed 28 February 2017, <pdriversproject.com.au/about/>.

In regard to parents, the Committee heard that while they are usually very reliable monitors of obviously unsafe behaviours among their children, such as drink-driving and speeding, parents often fail to recognise the significance of other risk factors, particularly the influence of peer passengers, and the risks involved with driving at night or in poor weather. The Committee understands that parental supervision and instruction tends to focus on the simpler skills of car control and milestone-achievement, with far less emphasis on risk perception and awareness.

Parents are well-placed to influence their children's behaviour and to model attitudes about what constitutes safe driving.³⁹³ The TAC 'Strings' mass media campaign, delivered as part of the *Towards Zero* strategy, emphasised parents' position as role models. It aimed to deliver the message that children begin learning how to drive long before they are old enough to have licences, by observing and modelling their parents' driving behaviours.³⁹⁴ Consequently, the Committee is of the view that further educating parents may be an effective way to improve driver safety. One way to work towards this could be more formal instructor education for parents, as is required of parent instructors in Sweden. Beginning in 2006, all parents or friends wishing to supervise a learner driver have been required to complete a training program.³⁹⁵

The importance of good-quality parental support is also recognised in the federal government's *Keys2Drive* program, which provides a free driving lesson with a professional driving instructor, for learner drivers and their parent or supervisor. Parents and supervisors are then exposed to the professional driver's style of teaching, and are also provided with a 'supervisor's guide', to assist them provide good-quality support to learner drivers as they accrue the 120 hours of supervised driving practice.³⁹⁶ The Committee commends this program and it is also highly supportive of the Victorian Government complementing this with other initiatives that specifically target parents or supervisors to improve the quality of the 120 hour supervised driving experience for learner drivers. A key component of this should be raising awareness of the risks on the road and strategies to manage these, in addition to the usual development of practical and physical driving skills. The Committee believes that focussing on the important role of driving supervisors will further complement the overall aim of Victoria's GLS to improve the safety of young people once they are driving independently on the road.

RECOMMENDATION 7: The Victorian Government review how it can support driving supervisors, through education or training opportunities, to improve the quality of the 120 hour supervised driving experience for learner drivers.

³⁹³ Royal Automobile Club of Victoria Ltd, *The Effectiveness of Driver Training/Education as a Road Safety Measure*, Noble Park North, 2016.

³⁹⁴ Towards Zero, 'What kind of driver are you raising?', viewed 28 February 2017, <www.towardszero.vic.gov.au/campaign/parents>.

³⁹⁵ Aicha Bah, Jana Boden, Emma O'Bree, Griffith University Law School Students, *Submission*, no. 85, 30 May 2016.

³⁹⁶ Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development, 'Keys 2 Drive: About the Learning Approach', viewed 28 February 2017, <www.keys2drive.com.au/content/about-learning-approach>.

Reliable vehicles

In its submission, the BSL raised the importance of disadvantaged young people having access to reliable vehicles, noting the impact that limited mobility access can have on securing and maintaining employment or training placements. The submission noted that young people with limited financial support tend to purchase cheaper, less reliable vehicles, which can have not only safety but also further financial implications: ‘...[they] are not just an impediment to employment and training but a drain on the limited resources of low-income Australians’.³⁹⁷

The submission canvassed the high demand for vehicle purchase and maintenance loan products, and recommended that the Victorian Government facilitate the development of a pilot affordable-access leasing scheme for eligible jobseekers:

That the Victorian Government seek expressions of interest from the community sector for the development of a pilot vehicle access program that will provide young Victorians the opportunity to access affordable and reliable private vehicles in order to secure and maintain employment. The pilot site will be an area of identified transport disadvantage and a condition of the pilot will be that vehicles remain insured and registered by the provider for the duration of their provision.³⁹⁸

In his evidence to the Committee, Tony Robinson, Senior Manager of Financial Inclusion at the BSL, provided further examples of comparable United States (US) programs, and advised it is ‘worth trialling’ in Victoria:

The evidence out of the US is clearly that where you can provide reliable, ongoing transport in the form of a car in those areas where there is high dependency, employment outcomes improve significantly along with other outcomes. We think that is worth trialling here. The absence of hard data from the Department of Employment has not helped us to make that case, but we think leasing cars to people as part of an engagement with them getting into the workforce is an idea worth testing.³⁹⁹

The Committee supports this recommendation in recognition that not all young people or their families have the financial means to purchase new or reliable vehicles.

RECOMMENDATION 8: The Victorian Government develop a pilot vehicle access scheme that provides young people with the opportunity to access an affordable and reliable vehicle in order to secure and maintain employment. The pilot scheme should target young people who have limited means to purchase their own vehicle and who are experiencing transport disadvantage.

³⁹⁷ Brotherhood of St Laurence, *Submission*, no. 90, 31 May 2016, p. 10.

³⁹⁸ Brotherhood of St Laurence, *Submission*, no. 90, 31 May 2016, p. 11.

³⁹⁹ Tony Robinson, Senior Manager, Financial Inclusion, Brotherhood of St Laurence, *Transcript of evidence*, 25 August 2016, p. 104.

5.1.4 Encouraging young people to drive safer vehicles

As discussed in chapter four, young drivers are disproportionately more likely to drive vehicles with fewer safety features compared to the rest of the population. Improving young people's vehicle choice is identified as a significant way to minimise their high crash risk, particularly as learner drivers progress to their probationary licence and are in the early stages of driving independently. A report by Monash University Accident Research Centre, *Advice and guidance on increasing the purchases and usage of safer cars by young drivers*, indicated that if all drivers upgraded their vehicle to the safest car in their desired class, overall safety could improve immediately across Australia by between 26 and 40 per cent. In the context of newly-licensed drivers, it referred to evidence estimating reductions in serious injury and fatal crashes of between 17 to 85 per cent, if they improved their vehicle choice.⁴⁰⁰

To date, improvements in vehicle safety have been achieved in Victoria through a consumer-driven approach that promotes and advocates for higher vehicle safety standards through various tools and media. In regard to promotion, a number of existing resources are available through the websites of VicRoads, RACV, Australasian New Car Assessment Program (ANCAP), the Used Car Safety Rating (USCR) and the TAC's Howsafeisyourcar.com.au, which aim to educate the broader community about vehicle safety ratings. However, the Committee is unaware of the effectiveness of these resources in reaching young people as they rely on individuals to access the websites of their own accord.⁴⁰¹

As the promotion of safe vehicles is one of the four components of the Safe System approach, the Victorian Government's *Towards Zero* includes a commitment to speed up the transformation to a safer car fleet among the broader community by enhancing the safety performance of the Government's vehicle fleet:

From 2018, the Government will require its car fleet to have the best safety features available as part of its overall purchasing policy. In addition to a five-star ANCAP rating, features may include a high pedestrian rating, Auto Emergency Braking, advisory speed altering technology, Lane Departure Warning or Lane Keep Assist and seat belt warnings or technology to increase seat belt wearing.⁴⁰²

As new technologies move through the road transport system, the average age of the vehicle fleet will reduce over time. The Committee notes that while this will benefit young drivers as they purchase second-hand vehicles that have more safety features, this will occur over several years rather than in the immediate future.

⁴⁰⁰ Scully, M, et al., *Advice and Guidance on Increasing the Purchases and Usage of Safer Cars by Young Drivers*, Monash University Accident Research Centre, Clayton, 2012, p. 8.

⁴⁰¹ Scully, M, et al., *Advice and Guidance on Increasing the Purchases and Usage of Safer Cars by Young Drivers*, Monash University Accident Research Centre, Clayton, 2012, p. 30.

⁴⁰² State Government of Victoria, *Towards Zero 2016/2020: Victoria's Road Safety Strategy & Action Plan*, Melbourne, 2016, p. 24.

Towards Zero also commits to targeting parents and young people in promotions to encourage them to prioritise car safety when they purchase their first vehicle. This initiative is supported in the broader road safety literature on the basis that parents play a critical role in nurturing safe and responsible drivers, and in this specific context, they can influence the vehicle choice of their children.

In recognition of the high costs of purchasing and maintaining a vehicle, the YACVic proposed in its submission that the Victorian Government support disadvantaged young people to access safer vehicles:

As part of the *Towards Zero* objective on promoting safer car purchases amongst young people, develop initiatives to make second-hand vehicles with strong safety features (perhaps including vehicles formerly belonging to government fleets) more easily available to young people on low incomes.⁴⁰³

As well as making particular provision for those experiencing disadvantage, the Committee is of the view that all young drivers should be encouraged to drive safer vehicles. Targeted promotions, as discussed above, will go some way to achieving this, but the Victorian Government should consider other alternatives, such as incentive programs, to ensure that young people, and those supporting young people in vehicle purchases, improve their vehicle choice. The Victorian Government currently offers a number of financial incentives to young people, including trade apprentices who receive a 50 per cent discount on their vehicle's registration and Transport Accident Charge renewal fee. In addition, the *Free Licence Scheme* rewards young drivers with a free licence if they maintained a good driving record while on their probationary licence.

Given the likely road safety benefits, developing an effective initiative that encourages young newly-licensed drivers to improve their vehicle choice should be a priority for the Victorian Government.

RECOMMENDATION 9: The Victorian Government develop targeted initiatives to facilitate the purchase of safer vehicles by young people.

5.2 Public transport

The adequacy of public transport services in Victorian non-urban areas is identified as a key barrier for many young people accessing opportunities for employment, further education and training. As advised by Professor Johanna Wyn, Director of the Youth Research Centre at the University of Melbourne, it is 'an old problem and it is the same old problem'.⁴⁰⁴ Rather than embed car dependence in areas, Professor Wyn was of the view that enhancing public transport opportunities and other resources will better meet the various mobility needs of communities. Similarly, Brian Negus, General Manager of Public Policy at the RACV advised that investing in public transport, rather than lowering the

⁴⁰³ Youth Affairs Council Victoria, *Submission*, no. 76, 27 May 2016, p. 26.

⁴⁰⁴ Professor Johanna Wyn, Director, Youth Research Centre, University of Melbourne, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 August 2016, p. 29.

probationary driving age, will benefit a much broader group, including older people. In reference to RACV's 2014 Regional Growing Pains report, Brian Negus proposed further improvements of rail services to major regional centres and bus networks, as well as improved connectivity between bus and train timetables.⁴⁰⁵

Many other stakeholders also proposed that the Victorian Government create a high quality public transport network in order to combat disadvantage. For example, the joint submission of the Monash University Accident Research Centre (MUARC) and the Institute of Transport Studies (ITS) recommended that investment in low-cost, safe, sustainable and reliable public transport options would be highly beneficial for young people living in rural and regional areas.⁴⁰⁶ Some stakeholders highlighted the need to focus on improving the responsiveness of bus services as they are cheaper and easier to reform than trains.⁴⁰⁷ Dr Alexa Delbosc of Monash ITS told the Committee that buses were one of the only real workable options for public transport for young people in these areas:

... for the majority of people in outer Melbourne that is their only option for getting to work or getting to school ... and the more we can improve and have as direct frequent connections as we can with our bus network and consult with communities in regional and rural areas to find out what their needs really are ... the more that we have options for people beyond just the car.⁴⁰⁸

However, other stakeholders advised the Committee of the significant undertaking involved in enhancing public transport infrastructure in rural and regional areas. James Purcell MLC, the Member for the Western Victoria Region and his Chief of Staff, Tanya Waterson, both reaffirmed the unviability of bus or train services in some local areas due to the geographical nature and small populations of those areas:

You cannot logistically run a bus out the back roads of Woolsthorpe or Kirkstall to pick up the 17-year-olds — or Cudjee or wherever. Train services to and from Melbourne are something we have been campaigning for, but that is not going to help the 17-year-old down here who needs a job. It is really tricky to look at a framework that would work down here just because of the nature of where we live.⁴⁰⁹

The RACV's Regional Growing Pains report also identified this as a crucial issue, noting that while adequate transport between regional centres and the surrounding areas is critical for many reasons, 'it is often difficult to justify investments in major upgrades in many smaller centres because of low population densities'.⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰⁵ Brian Negus, General Manager Public Policy, Royal Automobile Club of Victoria, *Transcript of evidence*, 15 June 2016, p. 19.

⁴⁰⁶ Dr Sharon Newnam, et al., *Submission*, no. 86, 30 May 2016.

⁴⁰⁷ Youth Affairs Council Victoria, *Submission*, no. 76, 27 May 2016, p. 22; Dr Alexa Delbosc, Institute of Transport Studies, Monash University, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 August 2016, p. 65.

⁴⁰⁸ Dr Alexa Delbosc, Institute of Transport Studies, Monash University, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 August 2016, pp. 64–65.

⁴⁰⁹ Tanya Waterson, Chief of Staff, Member for Western Victoria, Parliament of Victoria, *Transcript of evidence*, 8 September 2016, p. 185.

⁴¹⁰ Royal Automobile Club of Victoria Ltd, *Regional Victoria: Growing Pains*, Noble Park North, 2014, p. 4.

The Committee recognises these concerns, and also acknowledges the challenges in improving the responsiveness of the public transport system for a group of young people whose individual travel needs may vary from day to day, and from each other. There is clearly a demand for localised and agile responses to individual travel needs. The improvement of public transport services, based on detailed planning and scoping of the needs of young people, was a strong theme identified in the evidence.⁴¹¹ Professor Wyn described this as a 'more on-the-ground nimble approach'.⁴¹²

5.2.1 Regional Network Development Plan

The Committee understands that the Victorian Government's Regional Network Development Plan (RNDP) has employed such an approach to improve transport services and connections, with a key aim of 'tailor[ing] public transport priorities and actions for each region that respond to changing travel needs'.⁴¹³ It was launched in 2016, with the Victorian Government investing \$1.3 billion in the 2016–2017 state budget to commence the plan. Alan Fedda, the Executive Director of Customer Experience at Public Transport Victoria (PTV) advised the Committee that supporting the social and economic inclusion of communities through enhanced access to education, employment and social activities is a key principle of the plan.⁴¹⁴ He referred to examples of improved connectivity to local education institutions already underway:

... so there are a number of improvements already planned, and we are progressively reviewing town bus networks to ensure they meet the needs of the community...To date we have already made changes in Geelong and Bendigo, which enables more frequently connected services to key areas, like health and education precincts in those regions, and also to improve connections to train stations.

... we have introduced a range of connected services in key regional university campuses. That includes La Trobe University in Bendigo, Deakin campuses in Waurin Ponds, central Geelong and Warrnambool, Federation University campuses in Ballarat and there are services planned for Churchill.

We are also looking at better services for TAFEs in regional Victoria and we have included improvements in Bendigo, Geelong and the Latrobe Valley. These are all important options to ensure that younger people have access to public transport to get to and from education institutions.⁴¹⁵

⁴¹¹ Dr Alexa Delbosc, Institute of Transport Studies, Monash University, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 August 2016; Brian Negus, General Manager Public Policy, Royal Automobile Club of Victoria, *Transcript of evidence*, 15 June 2016; Professor Johanna Wyn, Director, Youth Research Centre, University of Melbourne, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 August 2016; Royal Automobile Club of Victoria Ltd, *Submission*, no. 40, 18 May 2016.

⁴¹² Professor Johanna Wyn, Director, Youth Research Centre, University of Melbourne, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 August 2016, p. 31.

⁴¹³ State Government of Victoria, *Connecting Regional Victoria: Victoria's Regional Network Development Plan*, Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources, Melbourne, 2016, p. 7.

⁴¹⁴ Alan Fedda, Executive Director, Customer Experience, Public Transport Victoria, *Transcript of evidence*, 25 August 2016, p. 124.

⁴¹⁵ Alan Fedda, Executive Director, Customer Experience, Public Transport Victoria, *Transcript of evidence*, 25 August 2016, p. 124.

Alan Fedda also indicated that as part of the RNDP, the Government will establish local transport forums in smaller rural communities to 'review and develop innovative local transport solutions'.⁴¹⁶

As the RDNP is only in the first of a 20 year implementation plan, it is impossible to anticipate what impact it will have on improving transport mobility for young people of a non-driving age or those without access to private transport options. However, the Committee believes that if the plan continues to progress transport initiatives based on local solutions and a passenger-first approach, with the broader aim of supporting social and economic participation, there will be a greater likelihood of meeting the travel needs of young people in these rural and regional communities.

The Committee is also of the view that these local transport forums offer a valuable opportunity for the Victorian Government to learn more about the specific transport barriers experienced by young people, particularly in remote areas of Victoria. Young people of non-driving age and those with limited access to private transport should be directly targeted to participate in the forums to explain the transport barriers that they regularly encounter, and to assist PTV to develop localised and responsive transport options that support them to travel independently.

RECOMMENDATION 10: The Victorian Government specifically target young people from rural Victoria to participate in the local transport forums as part of the Regional Network Development Plan to learn more about the access issues they experience in accessing employment, education and training, and social activities.

5.2.2 School Bus Program

The Committee received evidence from the Department of Education and Training and PTV about the School Bus Program (SBP), which is co-governed by these two Victorian Government agencies. It provides free bus transport to rural primary and secondary students to access their nearest school. Students are eligible for the program if they are geographically isolated and have limited access to public transport or private transport options.⁴¹⁷ Almost 70,000 students across 330 bus networks in rural and regional Victoria utilise the service. Post-secondary students and apprentices may also be permitted to travel at no cost on the school bus service if they are:

- students undertaking further education or training courses, such as university TAFE or adult and community education
- apprentices who are required to attend school or

⁴¹⁶ Alan Fedda, Executive Director, Customer Experience, Public Transport Victoria, *Transcript of evidence*, 25 August 2016, p. 124.

⁴¹⁷ Victorian Auditor-General, *Victorian Auditor-General's Report: Access to Education for Rural Students*, Melbourne, 2014, p. 28.

- students enrolled in an accredited course of study or an approved course for the unemployed, who live 4.8 km or more from the education and training provider.⁴¹⁸

The general public may also travel on the bus service, subject to the appropriate checks and upon payment of a fare.⁴¹⁹

The principals of the schools serviced by each bus service are typically responsible for its administration, including approval of non-school passengers. In 2016, a trial of PTV taking responsibility for some services' administration began, to facilitate delivery of 'efficient, effective services to more travellers through a centralised coordinated delivery system'.⁴²⁰ The Committee strongly supports this trial, as it will enable PTV to determine demand for the bus services from post-secondary students and the general public, and explore opportunities for better utilisation of the services. The Committee notes there is growing support for the use of the SBP in this way, with the YACVic proposing a similar recommendation in its submission to the inquiry⁴²¹ and the RNDP also mentioning the potential use of school buses outside of school hours to meet the travel needs of people other than school-age students.⁴²²

RECOMMENDATION 11: Public Transport Victoria and the Department of Education and Training publicly review how the School Bus Program could be better utilised to meet the transport needs of young people from rural areas to access employment, education and training opportunities.

5.2.3 Community transport

In providing evidence to the Committee, various stakeholders suggested the use of local, innovative transport solutions to enhance young people's transport mobility, particularly in rural areas. Community transport refers to a less formal type of public transport and typically fills the gaps in the provision of public and private transport. Local councils are often responsible for providing, or at least facilitating the provision of community transport services, in addition to not-for-profit community organisations. Such services can range from minibuses, taxi-sharing schemes, car-pooling and semi-formalised lift sharing.⁴²³

⁴¹⁸ David Howes, *Supplementary evidence*, Department of Education and Training, 11 October 2016.

⁴¹⁹ David Howes, *Supplementary evidence*, Department of Education and Training, 11 October 2016.

⁴²⁰ David Howes, *Supplementary evidence*, Department of Education and Training, 11 October 2016.

⁴²¹ Youth Affairs Council Victoria, *Submission*, no. 76, 27 May 2016, pp. 23, 27.

⁴²² State Government of Victoria, *Connecting Regional Victoria: Victoria's Regional Network Development Plan*, Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources, Melbourne, 2016, p. 4.

⁴²³ Currie, G, et al., *Rural and Regional Young People and Transport: Improving Access to Transport for Young People in Rural and Regional Australia*, National Youth Affairs Research Scheme (NYARS), Canberra, 2005; East Gippsland Shire Council and Wellington Shire Council, *2003-2013 Let's GET Connected: Gippsland East Transport Connections Project*, Sale, 2013; Stanley, J and Banks, M, *Transport Needs Analysis for Getting There and Back: Report for Transport Connections: Shire of Moyne and Corangamite*, Monash Sustainability Institute, Melbourne, 2012.

The value in these localised solutions is underpinned by the involvement of local agencies and stakeholders to identify the unique mobility needs of their communities and developing innovative ways to meet such needs.⁴²⁴ As noted earlier, the local transport forums to be established as part of the RNDP will provide an appropriate avenue to facilitate local community discussions on these issues.

While community transport currently mainly services the elderly or people with disabilities, there is growing recognition of its role in supporting young people to engage in further education and training, employment and social activities. Ken Radley, Senior Educator of the Education Support Unit at South West Institute of TAFE, told the Committee of various community-run transport solutions used to assist 15 to 17 year olds to access an alternative secondary school program in the Corangamite shire:

We have had grandmothers that we have given fuel vouchers to pick up a range of kids from, say, the northern part of that shire. We have had a community bus that has driven and picked up young students to a hub. We have on occasion been able to work with the education department to have our VET students on those buses, again to get to a hub, and we have picked up the students. So we have looked at many ways to make sure that we can keep these young people engaged in further education and training. Even using community members that work or live in the regional areas, we have certainly linked them up, and we have linked up other students that currently do have transport.⁴²⁵

Brian Negus at the RACV also provided the Committee with existing examples of community transport operating in regional areas in Victoria. These are outlined in Text Box 5.1.

Text Box 5.1 Community Transport Examples⁴²⁶

Saturday Community Bus: Nillumbik Shire Council (NSC)

The NSC Saturday Community Bus was established by a group of local residents to address the transport disadvantage experienced in northern areas of the Shire. The service is driven by volunteers, coordinated by Council and can be accessed by everyone (regardless of age and whether a resident of the Shire or not). Connecting with the Hurstbridge line train timetable, the service is a means for people to travel up to the St Andrews market and has long been a service that has helped young people get around the Shire. Payment for the service is by gold coin donation.

Peninsula Transport Assist (PTA)

Operating on the Mornington Peninsula, PTA offers services to all residents regardless of age. The service is geared towards people experiencing transport disadvantage along with a focus on those experiencing financial disadvantage, sickness, destitution and helplessness. In addition to providing volunteer drivers who use their vehicles to get people around there are buses available which groups can hire and either drive themselves or use one of PTAs drivers to get them around.

⁴²⁴ Bus Industry Confederation (BIC), *Moving People: Solutions for a Liveable Australia*, Kingston, 2012, pp. 6, 70.

⁴²⁵ Ken Radley, Senior Educator, South West Institute of TAFE, *Transcript of evidence*, 8 September 2016, p. 197.

⁴²⁶ Royal Automobile Club of Victoria (RACV) Ltd, *Supplementary evidence*, 4 July 2016.

Whittlesea Community Connections (WCC)

WCC provide transport to people who live in the City of Whittlesea who experience disadvantage through age, illness, disability or income and requires a referral from a community health, social or welfare worker. It is also a requirement of the service that users not have friend or family members who are able to provide transport. Once a referral has been accepted transport is available to activities such as visiting friends and family or attending/participating in social, cultural or sporting activities.

King Valley Community Arranged Ride (C.A.R)

King Valley C.A.R. utilises local volunteers, driving their own vehicles to transport members who need to travel to public transport or to a regional centre for appointments, shopping or social reasons. The aim of this program is to provide transport to community members who are located in areas with limited or no taxi service and with limited or no access to community or public transport. Transport is provided by local community volunteers, using their own vehicles.

Ridesharing was one mode of community transport often referred to by witnesses, particularly in the context of rural areas where running traditional bus services is not viable.⁴²⁷ Ridesharing involves people without their own form of transport catching a lift with other drivers, in their private vehicles, who are travelling in a similar direction. The Committee heard that ridesharing is highly relevant in the current environment of emerging technologies, which promote the creation of innovative and web-based systems to make it easy for people to connect and share rides to workplaces and other commitments.⁴²⁸

Another localised transport solution is flexiride, which Stuart Johns, Manager of the RNDP referred to in his evidence to the Committee:

Flexiride is a bit of a different approach to providing public transport. It uses a vehicle which may or may not be a bus. To give you an example, in Yarrawonga up on the border on the Murray River we have replaced the former town bus service, which for background was carrying on average about two passengers per trip, with a taxi. So the town taxi at a public transport fare delivers a service to bus stops throughout the town. If there are no passengers, the service does not run. It results in more business for the local taxi operator and a more appropriate vehicle for getting to some of the smaller streets that exist within the townships. We get better coverage at a lower cost and a better, sustainable taxi industry, so we are taking a transport network approach rather than just looking at traditional buses.⁴²⁹

The Committee understands that the Victorian Government established a specific program in 2006, *Transport Connection Programs*, to assist rural and regional communities to improve access to local transport. It included the allocation of

⁴²⁷ James Purcell MLC, Member for Western Victoria, Parliament of Victoria, *Transcript of evidence*, 8 September 2016; Professor Rebecca Ivers, The George Institute for Global Health, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 October 2016.

⁴²⁸ Brian Negus, General Manager Public Policy, Royal Automobile Club of Victoria, *Transcript of evidence*, 15 June 2016; Dr Jessie Mitchell, Policy Manager, Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, *Transcript of evidence*, 25 August 2016; Professor Rebecca Ivers, The George Institute for Global Health, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 October 2016.

⁴²⁹ Stuart Johns, Manager, Regional Network Development, Public Transport Victoria, *Transcript of evidence*, 25 August 2016, p. 124.

\$18 million over four years to fund 32 projects, and was built on a pilot program from 2003. In 2009, the Government extended the program, with \$22.8 million allocated in the 2010 budget.⁴³⁰

The Victorian Auditor-General's Office (VAGO) reviewed the Program in 2011, reporting that while it was designed to enhance local communities' capacity to overcome transport disadvantage, there was limited evidence to demonstrate that this had occurred. This was due to weaknesses in the program's governance, oversight and monitoring by the responsible department, the former Department of Planning and Community Development.⁴³¹ Government funding ended in June 2013.⁴³²

The VAGO review also noted that there was no Victorian Government policy framework for community transport. The Committee believes this is still the case, although it did not have an opportunity to explore this matter further with the relevant department or local councils as part of this inquiry. Consequently, it is unaware of the extent to which councils manage or facilitate development of community transport options following the end of the *Transport Connection Programs* in 2013. It is therefore reluctant to make any recommendations in this area, although it notes the focus of local transport in the RNDP and supports the Victorian Government's moves to trial innovative local public transport services, in partnership with local councils and community organisations.⁴³³

The Committee believes there is an important place for localised and practical solutions to improve existing transport services, particularly when they are structured around meeting people's needs rather than around particular modes of transport. Making better use of existing resources and increasing the role of local decision making to identify and respond to ongoing transport barriers is essential to creating sustainable and highly-valuable local transport solutions.

FINDING 11: Community transport solutions can play an important role in enhancing transport mobility for young people in rural and regional areas, particularly when focussed on individual needs. The value in these transport solutions is underpinned by greater utilisation of existing resources and the involvement of local agencies, in consultation with the community, to identify and respond to transport barriers.

⁴³⁰ Victorian Auditor-General, *Victorian Auditor-General's Report: Local Community Transport Services: the Transport Connections program*, Melbourne, 2011, p. 2.

⁴³¹ Victorian Auditor-General, *Victorian Auditor-General's Report: Local Community Transport Services: the Transport Connections program*, Melbourne, 2011, p. viii.

⁴³² East Gippsland Shire Council and Wellington Shire Council, *2003-2013 Let's GET Connected: Gippsland East Transport Connections Project*, Sale, 2013, p. 3.

⁴³³ State Government of Victoria, *Connecting Regional Victoria: Victoria's Regional Network Development Plan*, Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources, Melbourne, 2016, p. 35.

Appendix 1

List of submissions

Submission no.	Name of individuals/organisations
1	Valerie Nizette-Wiseman
2	Sharyn O Bray
3	Isaac Black
4	Grace McKerral
5	Keira Schaefer
6	Ari de Wit
7	Aloysious Dacunha
8	Sam Trigg
9	Robert Hayward
10	Patrick Johnstone
11	Elise Hem
12	Raymond Muschialli
13	Tanya Borg
14	Raymond Ng
15	Russell Hardman
16	Martin Howard
17	Darren Murphy
18	Graham Hansen
19	Nicole Bradley
20	Rashid El-Rafei
21	Finn Sawyer
22	Clint Lovett
23	Sandra Heath
24	Ray Beebe
25	Lynne Pryor
26	Ronald Brandse
27	Katalin Mindum
28	Peter Weeks
29	Robert Jacob
30	Wendy Young
31	National Transport Commission

Submission no.	Name of individuals/organisations
32	Lynn Heard
33	Victoria Heron
34	Lucas Russell
35	Taylah Darmanin
36	Maddilyne Bindloss
37	Robert Hale
38	Department of Transport and Main Roads Queensland
39	Nick Young
40	Royal Automobile Club of Victoria (RACV)
41	Maxwell Tilley
42	Dean Petrou
43	Connor Mullen
44	Joshua Lanzon
45	Josh Kleeberg
46	Jack Hoogen
47	Alisha Roach
48	Jack Christiansen
49	Dimitri Georgandis
50	Kyle Wignell
51	Luke Diazikis
52	Harrison Giles
53	Sam Barton
54	Ben O'Sullivan
55	Wajid Ali
56	Damian Appleton
57	Bradley Young
58	Jackson Miloschew
59	Maddison Egan
60	David Roberts
61	Brendan Paterson
62	Donna Keating
63	Susan Kruger
64	Victorian Farmers Federation
65	Lauren Elvin
66	Abbey Growden
67	John and Sharon Kelly

Submission no.	Name of individuals/organisations
68	William Hornstra
69	James Purcell MLC
70	Jodie Cosham
71	Max Meyer
72	Cael Green
73	James Cosham
74	Law Institute of Victoria (LIV)
75	Transport and Road Safety (TARS) Research UNSW
76	Youth Affairs Council of Victoria
77	Royal Australasian College of Surgeons
78	Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety Queensland (CARRS-Q)
79	Transport Accident Commission (TAC)
80	Department of Transport NT
81	Damian Murphy
82	Lucia Finnigan
83	Jessica Orr
84	Department of Employment
85	Aicha Bah, Jana Boden and Emma O'Bree, Griffith University Law School Students
86	Dr Sharon Newnam, Associate Professor Jennifer Oxley, Dr Alexa Delbosc, and Michael Byrne
87	Mark Roberts
88	Australasian College of Road Safety
89	Australian Driver Trainers Association (Victoria) Inc.
90	Brotherhood of St Laurence
91	VicRoads
92	Matthew Sabransky
93	Noel Griffith
94	Chelsea Matley
95	Taj Merrett
96	Dylan Gravett
97	Zharia Lawlor
98	Courtney Fenton
99	Tate Canty
100	Charlie Lucas
101	Victoria Police
102	Hon. Mary Wooldridge MP

Appendix 2

List of witnesses

A2

Public Hearing – 15 June 2016

Name	Position	Organisation
John Merritt	Chief Executive	VicRoads
Robyn Seymour	Director, Vehicle and Road Use Policy	
Brian Negus	General Manager, Public Policy	Royal Automobile Club of Victoria (RACV)
Melinda Spiteri	Manager, Road User Behaviour	

Public Hearing – 24 August 2016

Name	Position	Organisation
Professor Johanna Wyn	Director, Youth Research Centre	University of Melbourne
Samantha Cockfield	Senior Manager, Road Safety	Transport Accident Commission (TAC)
Elizabeth Waller	Manager, Strategy and Programs, Road Safety	
Professor Judith Bessant	School of Global, Urban and Social Studies	RMIT University
Dr Alexa Delbosc	Institute of Transport Studies	Monash University
Michael Byrne		
Dean Petrou	VCAL Students	East Doncaster Secondary College
Joshua Lanzon		
Dimitri Georgandis		
Craig Carpenter	Teacher	
David Howes	Assistant Deputy Secretary – Schools Early Childhood and School Education Group	Department of Education and Training

Public Hearing – 25 August 2016

Name	Position	Organisation
Assistant Commissioner Doug Fryer	Road Policing	Victoria Police
Acting Senior Sergeant Ryan Burns		
Tony Robinson	Senior Manager, Financial Inclusion	Brotherhood of St Laurence

Name	Position	Organisation
Georgie Ferrari	Chief Executive Officer	Youth Affairs Council of Victoria
Dr Jessie Mitchell	Policy Manager	
Dave Serpell	Individual Youth Advocate	
Alan Fedda	Executive Director, Customer Experience	Public Transport Victoria
Stuart Johns	Manager, Regional Network Development	

Public Hearing – 7 September 2016

Name	Position	Organisation
Amanda Groux		
Sam Trethewey	Chair, Young Agribusiness Professionals	Victorian Farmers Federation
Hannah Lewis	Policy Officer, Young Agribusiness Professionals	
Claire Rasmussen	Director, VET Practice	FedUni TAFE
Geoff Sharp	Chief Executive Officer	United Way Ballarat
Torie Campbell	L2P Program Coordinator	
Wayne Scanlon	L2P Mentor	
Jacob Heard		
Meg Brennan	Student	Ballarat and Queens Anglican Grammar School
Leah Purtell		
Aislinn A'Speculo		

Public Hearing – 8 September 2016

Name	Position	Organisation
James Purcell MLC	Member for Western Victoria	Parliament of Victoria
Tanya Waterson	Chief of Staff	
Wendy Young		
Nick Young		
Ken Radley	Senior Educator	South West Institute of TAFE
Deon Cameron	L2P Coordinator	Warrnambool City Council
Anna Gage	Year 10 to 12 Coordinator	Brauer College
Shania Hallyburton		
Bryce Pace	Students	
Phoebe Cody		

Public Hearing – 4 October 2016

Name	Position	Organisation
Bernie Squire	Manager	Wodonga Chamber of Commerce
Darren Murphy		
Jack Beer		
Shaquile Singh		
Thomas Pascoe		
Riley Briggs		
Kristy Gibson-Emmins	Students	Wodonga Senior Secondary College
Lori Gow		
Ryan Durrant		
Liam Knight		
Jasmine Moore		
Roxanne Quinn		
Alex Stojanovic	Business Development Consultant	Wodonga Institute of TAFE
Michelle House	Director, Education and Vocational Skills	
Ivan Neville	Branch Manager, Labour Market and Research Analysis	Department of Employment
David Roberts		
Hannah Seymour		

Public Hearing – 24 October 2016

Name	Position	Organisation
Associate Professor Teresa Senserrick		Transport and Road Safety (TARS) Research, University of NSW
Professor Rebecca Ivers	Director, Injury Division	The George Institute for Global Health
Naomi Kinsella		Law Institute of Victoria (LIV) Young Lawyers

Appendix 3

Australian jurisdictions summary table

A3

This table is based on the comprehensive table included in the AustRoads Report: Senserrick, T and Williams, A, *Summary of Literature of the Effective Components of Graduated Driver Licensing System*, Austroads, Sydney, 2015, and contains minor amendments to reflect changes in GLS since the publication of the report.

Learner Permit Stage

	VIC	NSW	QLD	ACT	SA	TAS	NT	WA
Minimum Age	16y	16y	16y	15y9m	16y	16y	16y	16y
Minimum Tenure	12m if <21y age; 6m if 21y to <25y age; 3m if ≥25y age	12m if <25y age	12m if <25y age	6m	12 months if <25y age; 6 months if 25y or older	12m (continuous); (3m L1, 9m L2)	6m	Unable to complete practical driving assessment (PDA) until 16y6m age and 25 hours of pre-PDA supervised driving hours logged; when passed PDA and 25 hours 6m minimum
Permit Validity	10y	5y	3y	2y	2y	3y	2y	3y
Test to obtain Learner licence	Computer-based test	Computer-based test	Written test	Computer-based test in mandatory Road Ready Learner Licence Course	Computer-based test or written test	Computer-based test L1; On-road driving assessment L2	Written test	Computer-based test
Logbook supervised entries/Training course	120hrs, incl. 10hrs night <21y age; N/A >21y age	120hrs, incl. 20hrs night <25y age; N/A if ≥25y age; 1hr professional instruction can be recorded as 3hrs (max 10=30hrs); Option to complete Safer Drivers Course for 20hrs credit	100hrs, incl. 10hrs night <25y age; N/A if ≥25y age; 1hr professional instruction can be recorded as 3hrs (max 10=30hrs)	Road Ready Learner Licence Course: option to complete practical driving test for P licence or Competency-Based Training and Assessment with logbook (50h recommended)	75hrs, incl. 15hrs night driving	None L1; 50hrs L2	No minimum number of supervised hours required but 50 hours is recommended.	25 hours pre-PDA 25hrs post-PDA
BAC Limit	Zero	Zero	Zero	Zero	Zero	Zero	Zero	Zero
Speed Limit Restriction	As sign posted	90km/h	As sign posted	As sign posted	100km/h	L1: 80 km/hr; L2: 90 in 90 km/hr zone; 90 in 100 km/hr zone; 100 in 110km/hr zone	80km/h	100km/h

	VIC	NSW	QLD	ACT	SA	TAS	NT	WA
Demerit Point Threshold	5 points in 12m; 12 points in 3y	4 points in 3 yrs	4 points in 12m	12 points in 3yrs	4 points in 3 yrs	4 points in 12m; 12 points in 3y	5 points in 12m; 12 points in 3y	4 points in first year; 8 points in second year; 12 points third year onwards
Mobile phones	No mobile phone use, texting or hands free	No mobile phone use incl. hands free or loudspeaker devices	Hands free kits, wireless headsets and loudspeaker use not permitted; Passenger/supervisor not permitted loudspeaker use but can use hand held or hands free for one-way conversation if do not distract driver	Hand held use of mobile phone banned, hands free kits permitted	No use of any mobile phone function while driving	No use of mobile phone	No use of any mobile phone function while driving	Hand held use of mobile phone banned, hands free kits permitted
Towing	No towing	No towing	Permitted to tow another vehicle but cannot steer/drive vehicle being towed	Small trailers only not exceeding 750kg GVM	Allowed to tow trailers	No towing	Permitted to tow trailer/vehicle up to max. towing capacity of vehicle; May control vehicle under tow provided complying with all other licence conditions	Permitted to tow vehicle providing complying with all L licence conditions and relevant traffic code regulations

Probationary Licence Stage 1

	VIC	NSW	QLD	ACT	SA	TAS	NT	WA
Minimum Age	18y; Move directly to P2 if ≥21y age	17y	17y; Move directly to P2 if ≥25y age	17y	17y	17y	16y 6m	17y
Minimum Tenure	12m; Good driving record	12m	12m	3y	12m	12m (continuous)	2y if <25y age; 1y if ≥25y age; Only a single 'provisional' licence stage	6m
Test to obtain P1 licence	Practical driving test and hazard perception test	Practical driving test	Practical driving test	Practical driving test or Competency-Based Training and Assessment with accredited driving instructor	Hazard perception test; and practical driving test or Competency-Based Training with authorised/accredited driving instructor	On road driving assessment	Practical driving test	Hazard perception test
BAC Limit	Zero	Zero	Zero	Zero	Zero	Zero	Zero	Zero
Speed Limit Restriction	As sign posted	90km/h	As sign posted	As sign posted	100km/h	90 in 90 km/hr zone; 90 in 100 km/hr zone; 100 in 110km/hr zone	100km/h	As sign posted
Demerit Point Threshold	5 points in 1y; 12 points in 3y	4 points in 3 yrs	4 points in 1y	4 points in 3y; 8 points if 3y is complete; Road Ready Plus course	4 points in 3 yrs	4 points in 1y; 12 points in 3y	5 points in 1y	4 points in first year; 8 points in second year; 12 points third year onwards
Night time driving restriction (when unsupervised)	N/A	N/A	N/A unless disqualified from driving <25y age (once relicensed, restricted from driving from 11pm to 5am for at least 1y)	N/A	Midnight to 5am for 1y for drivers (exemptions apply)	N/A	N/A	Midnight to 5am (exemptions apply)

	VIC	NSW	QLD	ACT	SA	TAS	NT	WA
Passenger Restriction (when unsupervised)	One passenger 16-21y age only; One passenger only for remainder of PJ period if returning from licence cancellation	One passenger <21y age between 11pm and 5am if <25y age (exemptions apply); One passenger only for 12m if returning from licence cancellation	One passenger <21y age (excluding immediate family members) between 11pm to 5am if <25y age	N/A	One passenger aged 16-20yrs (exemptions apply)	N/A	N/A	N/A
Vehicle Restriction	Can only drive approved probationary vehicles (based on performance and power-to-weight criteria); Automatic condition if test passed in Auto transmission vehicle	Must not drive high performance vehicles (exemptions apply); Automatic condition if test passed in Auto transmission vehicle	Must not drive high performance vehicles if <25y age; Automatic condition if test passed in Auto transmission vehicle	Automatic condition for 1y if test passed in Auto transmission vehicle	Must no drive high powered vehicle if <25y age	Automatic condition if test passed in Auto transmission vehicle	Automatic condition for 1y if test passed in Auto transmission vehicle	Automatic condition if test passed in Auto transmission vehicle
Mobile phones	No mobile phone use, texting or hands free	No mobile phone use incl. hands free or loudspeaker devices	Hands free kits, wireless headsets and loudspeaker use not permitted if <25y age or returning from disqualification for offence when <25y age; Passenger/supervisor not permitted but can use hand held or hands free for one-way conversation if do not distract driver	Hand held use of mobile phone banned, hands free kits permitted	No use of any mobile phone function while driving	Hand held use of mobile phone banned, hands free kits permitted	No use of any mobile phone function while driving	Hand held use of mobile phone banned, hands free kits permitted
Towing	Only for work or under instruction	Light trailers only up to 250kg unloaded weight	N/A	Trailer with GVM <750kg only for first 12m	Allowed to tow trailers - subject to limits of trailer and towing vehicle	N/A	N/A	N/A

Probationary Licence Stage 2

	VIC	NSW	QLD	ACT	SA	TAS	NT	WA
Minimum Age	19y	18y	18y	N/A	18y	18y	N/A	17 1/2y
Licence Tenure to progress to next stage	3y; Good driving record	2y	2y if <25y age; 1y if 25y+ age or 24y and P1 issued when 23y; Exempt if P1 issued when 24+y age (go straight to unrestricted)	N/A	2y	2y if <23y age; 1y if 23y to <25y age or until 25y age, whichever first; 1y if ≥24y age	N/A	18m P1+P2 or until age 19, whichever is the later
Test to obtain P2 licence	N/A	Hazard perception test	Hazard perception test if <25y age	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
BAC Limit	Zero	Zero	Zero	N/A	Zero	Zero	N/A	Zero
Speed Limit Restriction	As sign posted	100km/h	As sign posted	As sign posted	100km/h	As sign posted	As sign posted	As sign posted
Demerit Point Threshold	5 points in 1y; 12 points in 3y	7 points in 3y	4 points in 1y	N/A	4 points in 3 yrs	4 points in 1y, 12 points in 3y	N/A	4 points in 1 y; 8 points in 2y
Night time driving restriction (when supervised)	N/A	N/A	N/A unless disqualified from driving <25y age (once relicensed, restricted from driving from 11pm to 5am for at least 1y)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Passenger Restriction (when supervised)	N/A	One passenger only for 12m if returning from licence cancellation	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Vehicle Restriction	Can only drive approved probationary vehicles (based on performance and power-to-weight criteria)	Must not drive high performance vehicles (exemptions apply)	Must not drive high performance vehicles if <25y age	N/A	Must not drive high performance vehicles if <25y age	N/A	N/A	N/A

	VIC	NSW	QLD	ACT	SA	TAS	NT	WA
Mobile phones	No hand-held mobile phone use	No mobile phone use incl. hands free or loudspeaker devices	Hand-held use only permitted while vehicle is legally and safely parked	N/A	No hand-held mobile phone use	Hand held use of mobile phone banned, hands and free kits permitted	N/A	Use of mobile phone banned, hands free kits permitted
Towing	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Allowed to tow trailers subject to limits of trailer and towing vehicle	N/A	N/A	N/A

Unrestricted Licence Stage

	VIC	NSW	QLD	ACT	SA	TAS	NT	WA
Minimum Age	22y	20y	20y	20y	20y	20y	18y6m	19y
Licence Validity	3 or 10y	1, 3 or 5y	1 to 5y	1 to 5y	1 to 10y	1 to 5y	1 to 5y	1 to 5y
Test to obtain licence	N/A	Driver Qualification Test (hazard perception test and driving knowledge test)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
BAC Limit	0.05	<0.05	0.05	<0.05	0.05	0.05	Zero for further 12 months or until 25y (whichever is sooner); 0.05 if ≥25y age	0.05
Demerit Points	12 points in 3y	13 points in 3y	12 points in 3y	12 points in 3y	12 points in 3y	12 points in 3y	12 points in 3y	12 points in 3y

Appendix 4

Road trauma estimates for lowering the licensing age in Victoria from 18 years to 17 years

VicRoads and the TAC undertook to estimate the impact on road trauma in Victoria were the licensing age to be reduced from 18 years to 17 years. The analysis was based on the following logic and approach:⁴³⁴

- In June 2014, 40 per cent of 18 year-olds held a Victorian driver licence.⁴³⁵ This proportion would be expected to increase if individuals in the population could obtain a licence at 17 years of age.
- New South Wales (NSW) has a minimum licensing age of 17 years. Assuming the licensing rate in Victoria would be the same as in NSW (where 35 per cent of 17 year-olds held a driver licence and 53 per cent of 18 year-olds held a driver licence⁴³⁶). It would be expected that, in Victoria, an extra 34,097 young drivers would be on the roads per year - about 72 per cent of which would be aged 17 years (24,404) and the remaining 28 per cent aged 18 years (9,692).⁴³⁷
- The current fatality, serious injury and minor injury rates for all people in crashes involving 18 year-old drivers in Victoria⁴³⁸ can be applied to the additional 18 year old drivers estimated to be on the roads.
- The rate for 17 year olds was estimated from the rate for 18 year-olds. The 10 per cent higher risk estimated by Forsyth et al. (1995) for first year drivers aged 17 years was then applied to the rate for 17 year-olds.

⁴³⁴ Ms Jennifer Thompson, *Supplementary evidence*, VicRoads, 28 July 2016; Transport Accident Commission, *Submission*, no. 79, 27 May 2016; VicRoads, *Submission*, no. 91, 6 May 2016.

⁴³⁵ Victorian licence data was drawn from the VicRoads Driver Licensing System. The proportion is derived from the number of licence holders at a given date in June 2014 - that is, at a given point in time. Victorian population data was drawn from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, June 2014.

⁴³⁶ 2104 NSW licence rate data, provided to VicRoads from the Centre for Road Safety, Transport for NSW.

⁴³⁷ NSW licensing rates are used because of the similarity of NSW to Victoria in regard to demographics. The NSW GLS also has many similarities to Victoria especially the minimum duration for the learner permit and the requirement for a minimum of 120 hour supervised practice as a learner driver, making it the most appropriate model for this analysis. Data from South Australia was not used due to changes to SA licensing system in 2014 which could have impacted its licensing rates.

⁴³⁸ The current rates were calculated using the mean number of people killed, seriously injured or sustaining a minor injury in crashes involving 18 year-old drivers (per year) over the period 2010 to 2014, in addition to June 2014 population and licence data. Victorian crash data was drawn from the VicRoads Road Crash Information System. Victorian licence data was drawn from the VicRoads Driver Licensing System. Victorian population data was drawn from the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

- The fatalities and injuries from the additional crashes involving 17 and 18 year-old drivers per year was estimated. As noted above, the proportion of 18 year-old drivers would be expected to increase if the licensing age were reduced to 17 years. So, not only would there be 17 year-old drivers on the roads, but more 18 year-old drivers, and additional crashes for both as a result.

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Extract of proceedings

The Committee divided on the following questions during consideration of this report. Questions agreed to without division are not recorded in these extracts.

Committee Meeting – 6 March 2017

Executive Summary

That the words in the Executive Summary: “The Committee came to the conclusion that licensing is a gateway to mobility for many young people in non-urban areas, and that mobility is essential for young people to access opportunities for their future. The central recommendation of this report is therefore that the probationary driving age in Victoria be lowered to 17 years” be deleted.

Moved: Ms Suleyman

The Committee divided.

Ayes 3	Noes 4
Mr Howard	Mr Tilley
Mr Eideh	Mr Dixon
Ms Suleyman	Ms Patten
	Mr Thompson

Defeated.

Recommendation 4

That recommendation four: “The Victorian Government lower the minimum probationary driving age to 17” be replaced with a finding that: “Lowering the probationary driving age from 18 to 17 will result in more crashes, and an increase in fatalities and serious injuries on Victorian roads.”

Moved: Ms Suleyman

The Committee divided.

Ayes 3	Noes 4
Mr Howard	Mr Tilley
Mr Eideh	Mr Dixon
Ms Suleyman	Ms Patten
	Mr Thompson

Defeated.

Minority Report

Minority Report. Geoff Howard, Natalie Suleyman, Khalil Eideh

As members of the Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee we submit this minority report opposing a key recommendation being made by the committee.

As acknowledged in the report in 4.3.3 many groups that provided evidence to the Committee, including agencies such as VicRoads, the RACV, the TAC, Victoria Police, and centres including CARRS-Q, Monash ITS, the Australian College of Road Safety, the Australian Driver Trainers Association, TARS UNSW and the Royal College of Surgeons, lowering the probationary driving age to 17 will result in increased road trauma for both young drivers and the broader community.

As stated by Professor Ivers of the George Institute for Global Health:

I am not talking about it as hugely significant. I am saying that people will die, and I consider that to be significant. So if you reduce the age, people are going to die as a result of that. You need to be in no doubt about that. That is going to happen. You are also going to have hundreds of people who have serious injuries, who are going to be disabled for the rest of their lives. There is no doubt about that, so you need to be very clear about that when you are making recommendations.

The predicted rise in road trauma is argued to be a consequence both of increased exposure of more young newly-licensed drivers on the road, as well as higher risks associated with driving independently at a younger age. The Committee was also advised that a reduction in the amount of time available to accrue 120 hours of supervised experience would contribute to a higher crash risk for 17 year-old probationary drivers.

While all committee members questioned the validity of the modelling upon which VicRoads and TAC based their numerical forecasts of additional fatalities and additional injuries if the probationary age is lowered to 17, we do not believe that the message provided by these bodies can be overlooked. We also note that there was no evidence available to the committee to counter predictions of additional road trauma being a result of lowering the probationary driving age.

John Merritt, the Chief Executive of VicRoads told the Committee:

...if you cast the net, you increase the trauma. How much of that are you prepared to trade off against that improvement in access? That is the difficult task of the committee...The consequences of simple mistakes are so ridiculously out of proportion to the mistakes that the young people make. That is the nature of the motor vehicle. It is incredibly cruel and preys ruthlessly on vulnerable people, and I see that every day.

Many stakeholders told the Committee that lowering the probationary driving age will undoubtedly result in higher levels of road trauma, due to both increased exposure (by having an additional cohort driving on the roads) and an age-based risk associated with driving independently at 17 years. The Committee was also advised that the highest crash risk for new drivers is in the first six to twelve months of receiving their licence, even for drivers who delay licensure to an older age.

We cannot ignore the safety implications of lowering the driving age, particularly based on young drivers' continued over-representation in road trauma crash data. We are also mindful that lowering the driving age will lead to a rise in crash fatalities and serious injuries simply through increased exposure from having another cohort of drivers on the road. While

benefiting a small group of young people, lowering the driving age would likely be at the expense of the broader community. This point was also made by Abbey Growden in her submission to the Committee:

As a firsthand witness to the damage of losing a young person in our community, it does not only cause damage to the immediate family and friends. The entire community is affected. This is not something I can support and will not be able to support no matter the argument for.

We therefore cannot support Recommendation 4 as agreed by other members of the Committee.

We do not believe that the Probationary age should be lowered to 17

We also note in evidence provided to the Committee that in 2005, New Zealand was rated as the worst-performing country in the OECD for young drivers between 15–17. The licensing age was raised from 15 in 2011, in response to the high fatality rate (21 per 100,000 15–24 year olds in 2009).

And further, in Europe, GLS are not as common. The safety outcomes of high-income European countries are, however, comparable to those in Australia. This can be attributed to a range of factors, including a far younger fleet of cars with more standard safety features, a larger population, better roads and shorter driving distances.

The majority of European countries have a minimum independent driving age of 18, and European Union (EU) guidelines stipulate that driving should not commence before 18. The EU countries with a minimum age of 18 include: Luxembourg, Estonia, France, Italy, Netherlands, Germany, Sweden, and Bulgaria. Those with an age of 17 include Ireland and the United Kingdom.

As emphasised in the AustRoads report, ‘research around the world indicated that higher provisional licensing ages are associated with crash reductions’, and that the older the licensing age, the better the safety outcomes.

A recent Austroads review of literature on the effective components of GLS highlighted an association between higher provisional licensing ages with crash reductions. In particular, the literature provides ‘clear support for a minimum provisional age of 17 over 16 years’. In regard to a minimum licensing age of 18, it stated:

There is also evaluation supporting age 18 over 16 and modelling research to support age 18 over 17, although not yet evaluations of actual crash outcomes due to changes in [GLS] models. Nonetheless the latter would be expected to reduce crashes and 18 years is the typical minimum age in Europe and Asia, as well as applying in Victoria for many years.

Further, the South Australian Government commissioned the Centre for Automotive Safety (CASR) in 2011 to conduct modelling analyses to determine the potential effect of raising the probationary driving age from 17 to 18. A 20 per cent reduction in serious injuries and fatalities was estimated for drivers aged 16 to 24 years and a 5-6 per cent reduction in all serious road injuries and fatalities.

In the Victorian context, the Committee accepts the view that lowering the driving age to 17 will result in more crashes, and an increase in fatalities and serious injuries. While it does not necessarily agree with the VicRoads and the TAC forecasts based on the concerns outlined above, it does believe that increased exposure will contribute to a rise in the road toll.

We therefore make the following finding:

Finding 1: That lowering the probationary driving age from 18 to 17 will result in more crashes, and an increase in fatalities and serious injuries on Victorian roads.

We note that, despite supporting a lowered driving age, Professor Johanna Wyn, Director of the Youth Research Centre at the University of Melbourne told the Committee it is a 'blunt instrument' to address the access needs of young people in rural and regional areas but noted that it would help a minority. Similarly, Professor Rebecca Ivers, Director of the Injury Division at the George Institute for Global Health, advised that driving independently would be advantageous for a small group of young people in rural areas but it is a difficult trade-off because it is these individuals who are at the highest risk of being killed or seriously injured on the roads.

We accept that there was no macro-level evidence to support a link between early licensure and higher levels of employment. (Finding 3)

We also agree that the current probationary driving arrangements appear to disadvantage a relatively small cohort of people as acknowledged in Finding 5.

We therefore support Recommendation 5, as presented in the Committee Report which recommends that the government should introduce an exemption process into the Road Safety Act 1986 that allows young people to apply for a probationary licence at 17 years based on grounds of undue hardship.

This may involve applicants providing evidence of an employment offer or acceptance into an education course or training program.

We also note that if Recommendation 1 and 2 of the Committee report are adopted by the government this would also mean that those gaining a licence by exemption would not be permitted to drive between 10 pm and 5 am. Nor would they be allowed to carry any peer passengers.

We wish to make it clear that we support all Findings and Recommendations as presented in the Committee Report other than Recommendation 4.

We understand the challenges faced by some 17 year olds in regard to mobility, especially those living in rural Victoria.

We believe that, to use the words of Professor Johanna Wyn, the 'blunt instrument' of a full reduction in the probationary driving age to 17 is inappropriate.

We are satisfied that this would cause too great a risk to road safety at a time when we are promoting a "Towards Zero" campaign.

We believe that a genuine exemption system can and should be instituted to address the needs of the small cohort identified above.

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Geoff Howard

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Natalie Suleyman'.

Natalie Suleyman

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Khalil Eideh'.

Khalil Eideh

