

# Why parents are the new 'heroes' in policing young drivers

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Parents are vital in encouraging their children to obey the road rules and young drivers are keen to show their parents they can be trusted, which means they may hold greater power in enforcing driver restrictions compared with traditional policing, according to QUT research.

Dr Alexia Lennon, from QUT's Centre for Accident Research & Road Safety - Queensland (CARRS-Q), will present her findings at the 2016 International Conference on Traffic and Transport Psychology being held in Brisbane from August 2-5.

CARRS-Q and Griffith University are co-hosting the event which draws together international experts from across the globe to share the latest in road safety research with the aim of reducing road trauma.

Dr Lennon said a small but in-depth study of parents and [young drivers](#) in Queensland had shown novice drivers were more likely to comply with the Graduated Driver Licensing system when encouraged to do so by parents rather than police.

"But the important question is do parents know all the restrictions of the GDL system and if not, how do they guide their [children](#) to be safe on the road?" she said.

"What we found was that broadly speaking the knowledge of restrictions was strong with all parents aware of zero alcohol limits and mobile phone use, however when it came to other rules, parents were less clear.

Many implemented their own rules.

"For example, one parent said they restricted their teenager to having only one passenger in the car after 10pm."

Dr Lennon said rather than resenting or resisting the responsibility for providing practical and emotional support to their young drivers, parents thought it was part of their parental responsibility to encourage compliance with driving restrictions.

"Young drivers on the other hand spoke of being very sensitive to their parents' views and potential disappointment should they find out that they had broken a road rule, taken an unnecessary risk or driven in an unsafe or illegal manner," she said.

"This shows that both parents and young drivers perceive the parental guidance and encouragement of compliance as critical to young driver behaviour."

Dr Lennon said young newly-licensed drivers were at a higher risk of being involved in a crash than any other age group and two-and-a-half times more likely to be killed in a crash.

"The GDL system is designed to address this by limiting novice drivers' exposure to high-risk situations, while allowing them to gain on-road experience," she said.

Dr Lennon said parental support was an important part of how young novice drivers navigated Queensland's Graduated Driver Licensing program, however more information was needed about parental views and experience and how much they could effectively guide provisional drivers.

She said the next stage of the research project was to use an online survey to more widely identify and assess the effectiveness of what parents were doing to encourage their P-platers to comply with provisional licensing conditions.

"Understanding what [parents](#) experience as easy or difficult to enforce and the success they achieve with their approach to encourage safe, lawful driving is necessary to help them better protect their teenage drivers."

Provided by Queensland University of Technology

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