

**Submission  
No. 45**

## **DRIVER EDUCATION, TRAINING AND ROAD SAFETY**

**Name:** Ms Erin Vassallo  
**Organisation:** Blue Datto Foundation Ltd  
**Date Received:** 20/02/2017



20<sup>th</sup> February 2017

The Chair  
Staysafe (Joint Committee on Road Safety)  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

VIA EMAIL: [staysafe@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:staysafe@parliament.nsw.gov.au)

Dear Sir/Madam,

**RE: SUBMISSION BY BLUE DATTO FOUNDATION LTD**

**Inquiry into Driver Education, Training and Road Safety**

Blue Datto Foundation Ltd (Blue Datto) is pleased to provide you with this submission for the Inquiry into Driver Education, Training and Road Safety currently being undertaken by the Staysafe Committee.

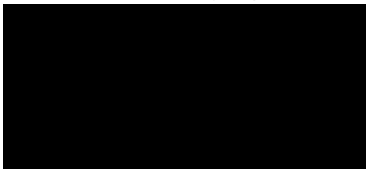
Blue Datto is a NSW-based registered charity that aims to protect the lives of young Australians and the wider community on our roads.

Our mission is to change the culture of young drivers by altering attitudes and behaviours. We do this by providing industry-leading, research based education programs to a variety of audiences with the aim of initiating road safety conversations with young Australians, their families and peers at home, school, in their community and across social media. Our targeted educational programs are written by leading Australian road safety experts.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this Inquiry. Please don't hesitate to contact me should you require any further information.

We look forward to working with the Committee to achieve improved road safety outcomes for the wider community.

Yours in Keeping Safe<sup>®</sup>,



Erin Vassallo  
**Erin Vassallo**  
**Director, CEO & Co-Founder**  
*LLM (Commercial Law), LLB, BA (Political Science), NMAS*  
**BLUE DATTO FOUNDATION LTD**



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Blue Datto Foundation is registered as a charity with the Australian Charities and Not for Profits Commission ABN 58 602 842 526. NSW Charitable Fundraising Authority CFN23787



## SUBMISSION TO STAYSAFE

(Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety)

### Inquiry into Driver Education, Training and Road Safety

#### INTRODUCTION

The Blue Datto Foundation is a NSW-based registered charity that aims to protect the lives of young Australians and the wider community on our roads.

Our mission is to change the culture of young drivers by altering attitudes and behaviours. We do this by providing industry-leading, research based education programs to a variety of audiences with the aim of initiating road safety conversations with young Australians, their families and peers at home, school, in their community and across social media. Our targeted educational programs are written by leading Australian road safety experts.

The point of difference for Blue Datto programs is that our attitude and behavioural messages are delivered by our peer mentors, university students who are trained by Blue Datto in small group facilitation, initiating open and honest discussions that might not otherwise occur. In addition the use of peer mentors creates an additional layer of road safety ambassadors as they educate themselves on road safety and advocate change among their peers, as well as the participants of the Blue Datto programs.

Blue Datto was established following the death of 17-year-old apprentice Philip Vassallo in a crash in which both drivers were red 'P' platers, and were friends. Phil, 'the kid in the Blue Datto', was a much-loved teenager who brought happiness to everyone who knew him.

Blue Datto's programs include:

- Keeping Safe® - our schools program aimed at Year 10 students (Pre-Drivers)
- Safe Together™ – program for sporting and community groups
- Supervising Safe™ – our online parent program which is currently in development.

This year we also have plans underway to launch a series of Parent Programs – educating and empowering parents and guardians of new and pre-drivers, via both face-to-face and online means.

Blue Datto utilises current road accident statistics and work closely with Police Crash Investigation Units, NSW Fire & Rescue, Government, schools and local communities to identify areas most in need of these programs. Until recently, our programs have mainly focused on the Western Sydney and Hawkesbury regions however due to demand for our Programs this year we plan to also target:



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- Regional areas of NSW directly affected by youth road accident fatalities including Oberon, Yass, Byron Bay, Tamworth, Deniliquin and Kandos
- The Central Coast
- The Hunter Region

### Keeping Safe® - Schools Program



Keeping Safe® focus' on encouraging lasting positive behaviour that helps youth build confidence, alter behaviours and speak up in risky situations.<sup>1</sup> Our programs are written and reviewed by leading Australian road safety Academics and experts and use appropriate teaching strategies and activities to examine and evaluate:

- Safe vs unsafe behaviours
- Individual and community health
- Communication
- Decision making
- Interaction

The Keeping Safe™ workshop deliberately targets year 10 students (who are usually yet to get their licence) as some research suggests that attitudes and behaviours may be best addressed prior to the individual obtaining their L's<sup>2</sup>.

The program contains films, police and emergency service presentations, and is facilitated discussion by our Peer Mentors ('near-peer' trained university undergraduates).

Each program culminates with students presenting their Safety Plans and ideas to school and community leaders. The students will finalise their Personal Safety Plans and write a pledge, which will be emailed to them around their birthday each year until they are 21 to reinforce the messages from the day.

To ensure inclusiveness, Programs are offered at no cost to students. In order to cover the program costs (approximately \$20 per student) Blue Datto relies on third party sponsorships.

### Safe Together™ – Community Program

In addition to working with students and schools, Blue Datto also delivers programs for the wider community including sporting and community groups, encouraging the philosophy that road safety is everybody's responsibility- the whole community has a role to play in reducing fatalities and accidents on our roads. This enables us to target youth who may have already left high school education, and also

<sup>1</sup> The Keeping Safe program was written for Blue Datto by the authors of the Victorian Governments' 'Fit2Drive program, the supporting research for some of the activities is licensed to Blue Datto by VicRoads.

<sup>2</sup> Rowe, R., Maughan, B., Gregory, A.M., Eley, T.C., 2013. The development of risky attitudes from pre-driving to fully-qualified driving. Injury Prevention online. doi:10.1136/onjprev-2012-040551





present our messages in a forum where certain youth may relate and respond more positively than the classroom environment. The Safe Together program contains similar material to Keeping Safe™, albeit in a shorter, more targeted program structure.

### Supervising Safe™ - Parent / Guardian Program

Blue Datto's Parent /Guardian Program 'Supervising Safe' aims to encourage and create awareness of the need for parents to be active in the road safety education of young adults, both as Learner Drivers, and beyond. The program encourages community-specific discussions and address topics including who should teach a learner driver, where to teach a learner driver, the importance of safe cars, role modelling, thinking beyond the Learner phase and how to know your child on the road.

*"As police officers we see the carnage and tragic waste of young lives, often under horrific crash circumstances. Education is vital in preventing more deaths and injury to younger drivers and all road users. The Keeping Safe program by Blue Datto is central to shift the change in attitude and behaviour in the younger generation to keep all members of the community safe and we highly recommend it to all school and community groups."* Scott Weber, President, Police Association of NSW

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

Blue Datto understands that the Committee will inquire into, and report on, the role of whole-of-life driver education and training in supporting improved road safety outcomes in New South Wales, with particular reference to:

- a) Trends in road safety research and crash statistics
- b) Evaluating current, including the effectiveness of refresher training and skills updating, and driver training adaptation to changing vehicle technology
- c) The needs of any particular driver groups
- d) The needs of driver trainers, both professional and non-professional
- e) The needs of metropolitan, rural and regional drivers
- f) The needs and expectations of passengers and other road users
- g) The cost of driver training standards and how the costs should be allocated
- h) The experience of other jurisdictions, and interstate cross-border issues
- i) Other related matters.



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Blue Datto's inquiry submission makes specific recommendations in relation to:

- The needs of any particular driver group, being future and pre-drivers
- The needs of parents and guardians (as non-professional driver trainers)

## THE NEEDS OF PRE-DRIVERS

### Key Information

In 2016 Australia experienced a 17.3 per cent increase in driver fatalities in the 17-25 age bracket compared with 2015<sup>3</sup>. This was the largest increase for any age group across the 12 month period. Given the reduction of youth fatalities in prior years, this is a concerning result that requires immediate attention.

Whilst the majority of Australia's Driver Education, Training and Road Safety programs target either primary school children or those who have recently attained their Ls, at Blue Datto we see great potential in specifically targeting pre-drivers – predominantly 15 year olds who are yet to undertake any practical driver training.

Statistics clearly show that 'L' plate drivers are the safest drivers on the road. Blue Datto believes we should harness this receptiveness to learning to influence attitudes and behaviours lasting into when the drivers get their 'P' plates and suddenly become the riskiest category of drivers.

NSW Police advise that approximately 27% of 'P' platers lose their license during this period. While it would be a study in itself to work out the why, it should be a goal of the NSW Government for young drivers and their parents to realise that driving is a privilege and not a right, and for a further period of supervised driving to be introduced for those who lose their license in addition to disqualification periods.

Blue Datto advocates for two methods of learning: community groups and schools /TAFE.

The first being the community setting because we believe you need to capture those students who leave school early and therefore miss out on the year 11 and 12 road safety programs. This group (just like Philip Vassallo around who this charity is based) are big road users both in their work and personal lives, and are statistically the riskiest category of drivers. This could also be influenced by the Keeping Safe course or similar programs being made available to apprentices through TAFE and similar learning institutions.

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<sup>3</sup> Australian Government, Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development. Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics; *Road Deaths Australia*, December 2016





Blue Datto also advocates utilising schools as the frontline for pre-driver education. Schools are often in the frontline of community distress if there is local road trauma, and equally, they should be adequately supported to not only respond to such crisis', but also help prevent them.

Whilst current Guidelines also state that Teachers are best placed to deliver curriculum programs in schools, further research needs to be undertaken to adequately understand if this is in the best interest of the students learning outcomes. Our peer mentors who are university students create an open and honest dialogue about what is actually happening with the peer drivers, it also creates an additional layer of road safety ambassadors within the community.

### Recommendations

- The NSW Government invest in a new public education program targeting pre and new drivers
- The NSW Government review current in-school requirements for road safety and driver education with a view to:
  - Effectiveness / success of current Crossroads Program
  - Suitability and effectiveness of teacher-led training
  - Opportunities for pre-drivers (Year 10)
- Further research be undertaken to understand the benefits of youth Mentor (near-Peer) systems in the context of road safety
- Research be undertaken to examine other potential (non-educational) ways in which schools can contribute to improved road safety outcomes for student drivers by helping to establish a positive and supportive new-driver culture
- The NSW Government invest in attitude and behaviour programs around road safety being offered to apprentices, trainees and other early school leavers.
- The NSW Government introduce an additional period of supervised driving for 'P' plate drivers who lose their license before they are given the privilege of being able to again drive unsupervised.





## THE NEEDS OF PARENTS AND GUARDIANS (AS NON-PROFESSIONAL DRIVER TRAINERS)

### Key Information

Australian teenagers and young adults are one of the most vulnerable groups of road users and today face even more potential distractions than ever before. Simply fulfilling practice hours, completing log books and passing the driver tests provides little 'real' protection from the dangers on our roads.

Children begin to develop attitudes to road safety from a very early age, predominantly from observing the behaviours of their parents<sup>4</sup>, there is a case to consider about the role parents do and should play as driver trainers.

Despite their influence on their child's behaviour, parents are often unaware of what these young drivers face on and around the roads when they are not there, and perhaps most importantly are not equipped with the information, resources and strategies to help protect their child in one of the most dangerous phases of their young life.

In addition, parents and guardians have often not reviewed or updated their road skills since they obtained their license, and we believe this teaching time is an ideal opportunity to refresh these skills.

For many reasons, it can be difficult to engage parents and guardians with conversations on road safety. Sadly, many believe their responsibility has finished once their child graduates to their Ps.

Throughout the 'L' plate driver training we need to adequately prepare children for when they will be solo drivers, and the reality of what they will face in the attitudes and behaviours of their peers.

*As they near the end of their supervision, it's critical for parents and guardians to truly give 'L' platers the experience they will have when they graduate to their 'P' plates. For example, they need to supervise their children driving home late at night from a party. The reality is that this will happen with an intoxicated teenager in the backseat who is misbehaving and vomiting when they get their P's and become the designated driver – give them exposure to this risky situation when you are there to help them identify and manage risks'.<sup>5</sup>*

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<sup>4</sup> Elliott, B. (1999) The Traffic Safety Education of Pre-School Children: An Extensive Review of Best Practice From Around The World. A report prepared for VicRoads

<sup>5</sup> Bridie Scott-Parker, National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Research Fellow, Leader and Senior Research Fellow, Adolescent Risk Research Unit (ARRU), Founder, Consortium of Adolescent Road Safety (CADROSA), Sunshine Coast Mind and Neuroscience - Thompson Institute, University of the Sunshine Coast.







It is important to ensure that the parents stay involved and interested while their children are on the 'P' plates. The reality is however that the Provisional phase is the most dangerous period<sup>6</sup> for any young driver and parents have an ongoing and critical role to play in keeping their child safe.

Additionally there are many other practical things that parents can do with their child in the Pre-Learner, Learner and Provisional stages to actively guide them through the critical first few years on the roads.

Recent research suggests a need for parents to be better educated regarding their importance in, and of, the driver licensing process, and the efficacy of their instruction, content and practices<sup>7</sup>.

### Recommendations

- The NSW Government invests in further research into the role of parents as driver trainers and road safety Mentors
- The NSW Government create a refresher course or resource for parents and guardians who are teaching children to drive
- The NSW Government invest in additional suggestions for the end of the 'L' plate period to ensure that learner drivers are exposed to experiences they will have when on their provisional license.
- The NSW Government explore the compulsory requirement of parents and guardians as supervisors continuing through the 'P' plate phase
- The NSW Government funds the development of up to date educational resources for parents of Pre-Learner drivers
- The NSW Government undertakes an educational campaign to inform parents and/ or guardians of:
  - their role in road safety education as trainers and safety mentors
  - resources available to support parents in their role as road safety mentors

*End of submission to the StaySafe Committee.  
Thank you for taking the time to consider our recommendations.*

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<sup>6</sup> Annual Statistical Statements for Road Crashes in NSW <http://roadsafety.transport.nsw.gov.au/statistics/reports.html>

<sup>7</sup> Obstacles to engaging in young driver licensing: Perspectives of parents. *Accident Analysis and Prevention*, doi.org/10.1016/j.aap.2016.12.006. Sehana Naz and Bridie Scott-Parker.

