



**MONASH** University  
Accident Research Centre

# Going Solo™

A resource for parents of P-plate drivers



**ExxonMobil**



*Going Solo – a resource for parents of P-plate drivers*, has been produced by the Monash University Accident Research Centre (MUARC) with the support of the ExxonMobil Australia group of companies. ExxonMobil has supported MUARC to promote injury prevention and safety education for around fifteen years.

MUARC is one of the world's leading injury prevention research centres. Through high-standard research and independent recommendations, MUARC aims to challenge and support citizens, governments and industries to eliminate serious health losses due to injury.

One of our greatest strengths is our ability to engage with policy makers and program administrators to ensure not only the relevance of our research but also an effective path for the implementation of our results into policy and practice.



## Introduction

Welcome to *Going Solo*,  
a resource for parents  
of P-plate drivers.

As you may be aware, P-plate drivers are involved in more crashes than any other driving group (including Learner drivers). Parents play a key role in guiding and promoting safe driving habits. This resource is aimed at providing strategies for parents to assist their P-plate drivers as they move into the solo driving phase.

No two states or territories have the same licensing requirements and so some strategies provided in this booklet will already be a requirement for some P-plate drivers. Please refer to your local licensing authority for requirements.

This booklet contains:

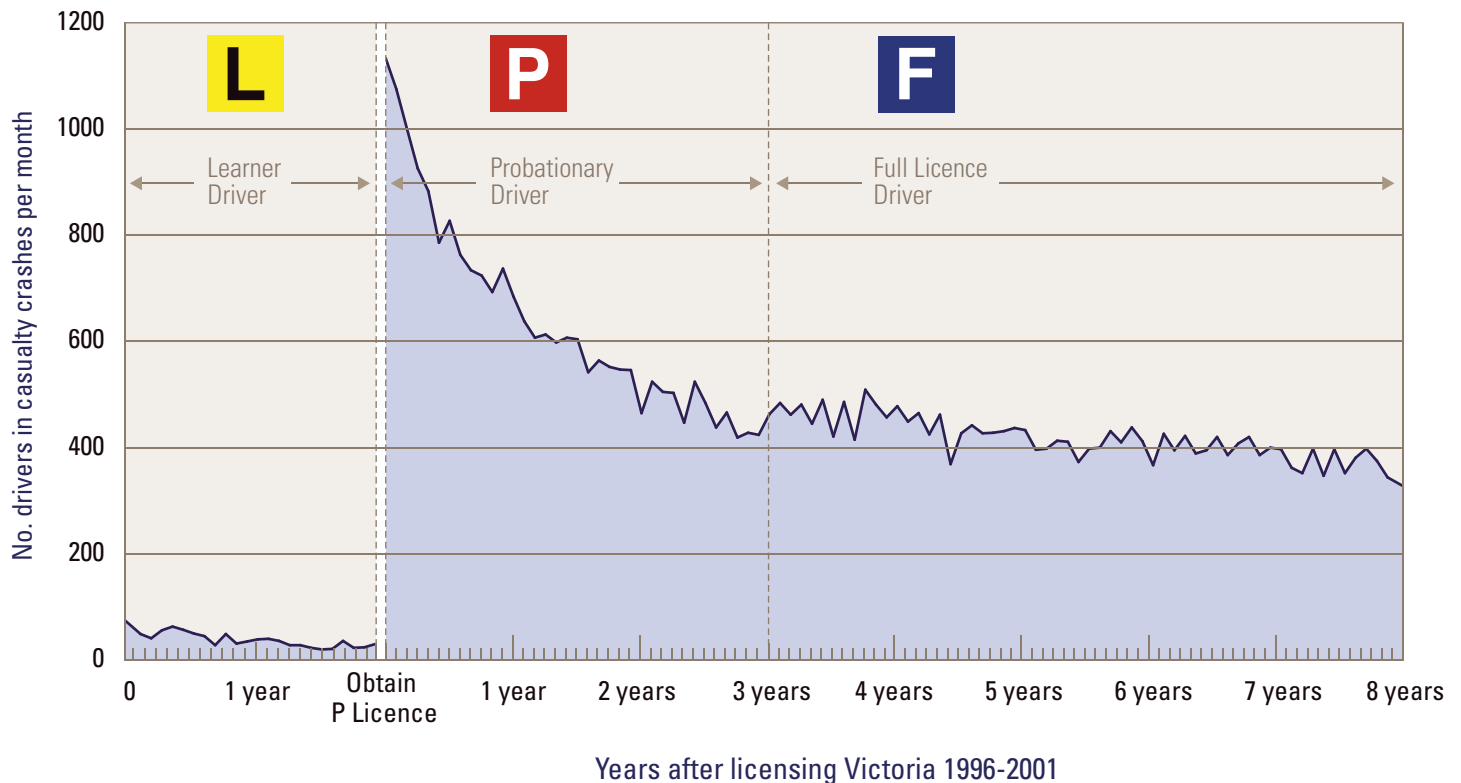
- Facts on risks
- Strategies to reduce these risks
- A contract for parents and P-platers  
(see **Vehicle Access Agreement** at the end of the *Going Solo* booklet)


## P-plate crash risk facts

### Did you know?

- P-plate drivers are estimated to be 33 times more likely to have a crash than L-plate drivers
- The risk of P-plate drivers having a crash decreases over the first 6 to 12 months

**Crash profile of new drivers.**



 Learner and new drivers involved in casualty crashes per month 1996-2001

## The transition from **L**s to **P**s

### Why are P-plate drivers more likely to crash than Learners?

- Both are inexperienced but, unlike Learners, P-plate drivers drive in high-risk situations

### As a parent you should recognise that:

- The most important factor in P-plate crashes is **inexperience** combined with certain driving situations, not solely risk-taking/personality
- Therefore, **EVERY** P-plate driver is at risk (not just the 'hoons')
- Whilst the ability to manage the vehicle is attained in the Learner phase, this is just the beginning for becoming a safe driver
- You are a major influence on the driving behaviour of your son/daughter
- Limiting your P-plate driver's driving to less risky driving conditions in the first 12-months will reduce his/her risk of being involved in a crash

Occasionally supervising (being a passenger with your new P-plate driver) is a good way for him/her to gain experience in high-risk situations and to ensure that he/she still has good driving habits

## So what are the high-risk situations?

We recommend you read through the information on the following risk factors and incorporate them into the **Vehicle Access Agreement** at the end of the *Going Solo* booklet.

### Legal driving situations that increase crash risk include:

- Driving with peer passengers
- Driving at night
- Being distracted (hands-free mobile phones, CD player)
- Driving in poor weather conditions
- Driving on high-speed roads
- Driving when tired

### Illegal behaviours that P-plate drivers should never engage in include:

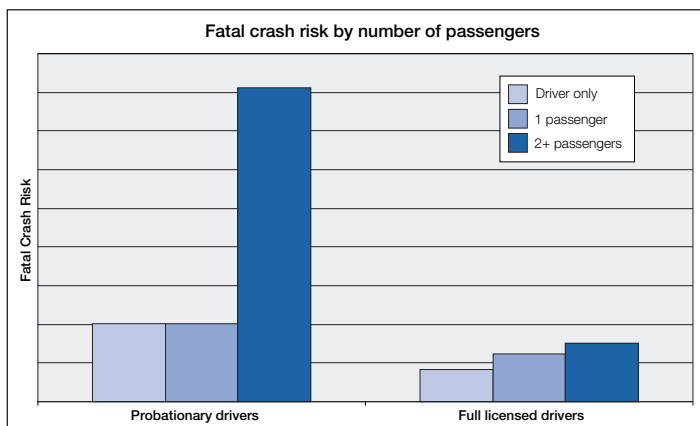
- Driving over the Blood Alcohol Content (BAC) limit and/or under the influence of drugs
- Driving recklessly (speeding, tailgating)
- Talking or sending/receiving an SMS on a hand-held mobile phone





## Driving with peer passengers

- P-plate drivers are more likely to crash when driving with peer passengers, that is, passengers around the same age as the P-plate driver (see graph below)
- Driving with a car full of peer passengers increases the fatal crash risk by **four times** compared with driving alone
- As the number of peer passengers increases, so does the fatal crash risk
- All P-plate drivers are more at risk of having a crash when carrying male peer passengers compared to carrying female peer passengers
- However the risk of a fatal crash is higher for male drivers carrying male peerpassengers than female drivers carrying male peer passengers



Source: VicRoads (2005), Young Driver Safety and Graduated Licensing Discussion Paper

## Suggestions to reduce the risks

- Discuss with your P-plate driver the importance of being a responsible driver and a responsible passenger
- Reducing the number of peer passengers is a successful way to lower the crash risk of P-plate drivers
- Set-up limits for carrying peer passengers for the first 12-months of the P-plate period (see **Vehicle Access Agreement**)
- When your son/daughter is a passenger with a P-plate driver he/she should avoid engaging the driver in distracting conversations, or by using mobile phones etc
- Discuss the possibility of your P-plate son/daughter not getting rides from peers, especially if there are going to be other peer passengers in the car

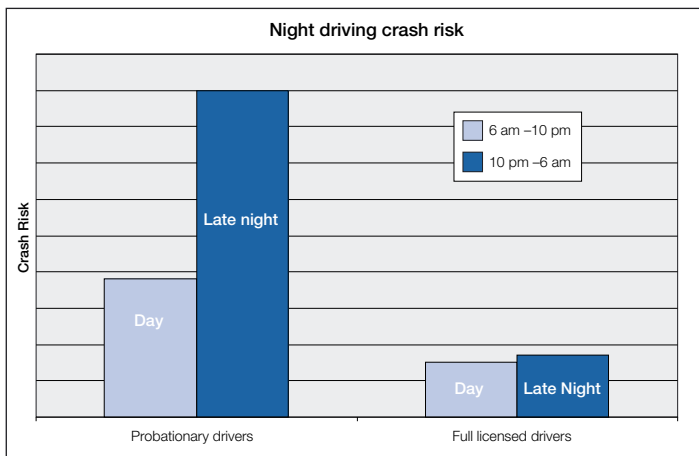
### Did you know?

- Peer passengers are often distracting for drivers as they often engage in demanding conversations, give last minute directions, and comment on things outside the vehicle
- Male P-plate drivers often engage in risk-taking, such as driving recklessly, to impress passengers



## Driving at night

- P-plate drivers are more likely to be involved in a fatal crash at night due to inexperience and reduced visibility
- This is also the most common time for people to engage in drink driving and be fatigued. P-plate drivers' inexperience reduces their ability to avoid a crash when exposed to other drivers behaving unpredictably when impaired by alcohol etc
- Some countries, including the USA and NZ, have restrictions on P-plate drivers driving at night (lasting from 6 to 24 months)
- Limiting night driving is an effective way to reduce crash risk



Source: VicRoads (2005), Young Driver Safety and Graduated Licensing Discussion Paper

## Suggestions to reduce the risks

Set up limits for driving at night for the first 12-months (see Vehicle Access Agreement)

## Distraction when driving

- P-plate drivers are more likely to be distracted than other drivers due to inexperience
- Distractions include loud music and extreme moods
- Talking on a mobile phone (hand-held or hands-free) is much more dangerous than having a conversation with a passenger as the person on other end of the mobile can't see the traffic situation
- Drivers who text message (SMS) spend four times more time with their eyes off the road compared to drivers who are not distracted

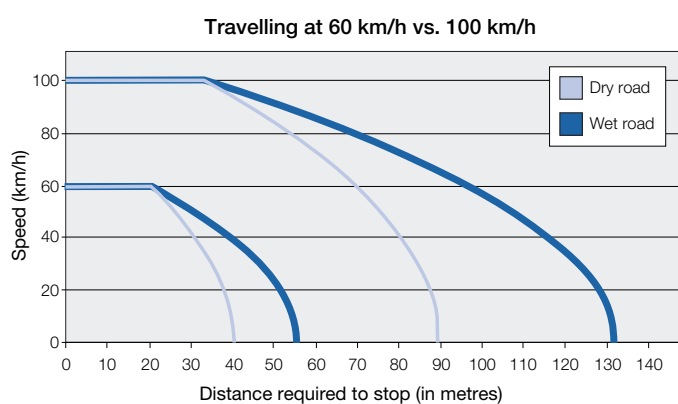
## Suggestions to reduce the risks

Discuss with your P-plate driver the risks of being distracted and set up strategies to avoid risks, including switching off phones



## Poor weather conditions and high-speed roads

- Driving in poor weather conditions including heavy rain, bright sun, and fog is extremely dangerous due to reduced visibility and increased distance needed to stop
- Stopping distances need to be increased because the amount of time available to react to hazards is shortened, and the distance needed to stop the car increases (see graph below)
- Vehicles are harder to manoeuvre at high speeds
- The severity of a crash increases as speed increases



Calculations based on a driver with average reaction time (1.2 seconds)

Source: TAC Stopping Distance Spreadsheet

### The graph shows that:

- If a driver is travelling at 60 km/h he/she will travel 20 metres before braking to avoid a hazard (reaction time = 1.2 seconds). It will take him/her 40 metres to stop when the road is dry and 55 metres to stop when the road is wet
- At 100 km/h a driver will take 90 metres to stop in dry conditions. This means that if he/she breaks hard to avoid a hazard 70 metres away, he/she will not be able to stop in time and if they collide they will hit it at 60 km/h

## Suggestions to reduce the risks

- Discuss with your P-plater the need to **SLOW DOWN** when it is wet and to drive based on the conditions
- Discuss the above graph so that your P-plater understands how stopping distance increases with travel speed

## Driving when tired and driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs

### Driving when tired

- If a driver has not slept in 17 hours, his/her driving ability is the same as a driver with a 0.05% Blood Alcohol Content (BAC)
- Teenagers need approximately 8 to 10 hours sleep every night. This is sometimes not possible given various commitments
- Driving when tired is particularly common in P-plate drivers and is often the cause of single vehicle crashes

### Driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs

- P-platers who drive under the influence of alcohol have a greater risk of being involved in a crash than experienced drivers (estimated to be five times greater)
- Serious penalties apply for P-platers who drive over the legal limit (in Victoria, South Australia, New South Wales, Northern Territory, Queensland, and Tasmania the BAC limit is zero; in Western Australia, and Australian Capital Territory the BAC limit is 0.02%)

## Suggestions to reduce the risks

Work out strategies so that your P-plater avoids driving when tired and or under the influence of alcohol or drugs. For example:

- Organise to pick him or her up
- Organise for him or her to use public transport or a taxi
- Get him or her to take a power nap (no more than 20 minutes)
- If he or she has had insufficient sleep, or has been drinking alcohol, encourage him or her to wait until he or she is sober and not sleep deprived before driving

## Driving recklessly

- Throughout the world speeding is the main risk factor for having a crash
- P-plate drivers tend to speed more than experienced drivers, especially males
- P-plate drivers also tend to follow too closely to the car in front compared to experienced drivers, putting them at risk of having a crash as they have less time to react

## Suggestions to reduce risks

- Parents should emphasise the expectation that their P-plate driver will be responsible at all times when driving
- The P-plate driver should avoid non-purposeful driving (cruising around) throughout the P-plate licence period as this often coincides with being distracted and showing off

## Improving your chances of walking away from a crash

- It is important that P-plate drivers are driving the safest car within the market range due to their increased crash risk
- Buying a safe car doesn't mean buying the most expensive car on the market
- Generally, larger cars and newer cars are safer on average

For detailed safety ratings by vehicle make and model visit [howsafeisyourcar.com.au](http://howsafeisyourcar.com.au)

## The Vehicle Access Agreement

### What is it?

The **Vehicle Access Agreement** is a formal agreement designed for parents and P-plate drivers for the first 12-months of the P-plate period

### Why have one?

It is a great idea to set up a **Vehicle Access Agreement** because this clearly sets out the roles of parents and P-plate drivers when it comes to either:

- a) Borrowing the family car, or
- b) The P-plate driver driving his/her own car for the first 12-months

### Tips:

- Set up the **Vehicle Access Agreement** with your P-plate driver and decide what conditions will be included
- We strongly recommend the conditions for driving at night and driving with peer passengers be included in the agreement
- Include other conditions that you and your/son daughter deem relevant based on the high-risk situations discussed in this booklet, and your own particular situation
- We recommend you use the three time frames set out in the example





# Setting up the agreement

**Step 1** Fill in the *Going Solo* 1, 2 and 3 time frames next to each period over the 12-months

**Step 2** Fill in the conditions for driving at night and with peers

**Step 3** Add other conditions that you deem relevant

**Step 4** Agree on your parental responsibilities and sign the agreement

## Recommended restrictions for the Vehicle Access Agreement

Months	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	<i>Going Solo 1</i>			<i>Going Solo 2</i>			<i>Going Solo 3</i>					
<b>Night driving</b>	Driving allowed between 6 am – 10 pm			Driving allowed between 6 am – 11 pm			Driving allowed between 6 am – Midnight					
<b>Driving with peers</b>	No passengers aged 16 to 23			No more than one passenger aged 16 to 23			No more than one passenger aged 16 to 23					

\* These conditions only apply when the P-plater is driving alone. If you are with him or her these conditions are exempt.

\*\* The P-plater is able to drive outside the above times if it is for work, religious, educational or sporting purposes.

## Role of the parent(s) in the Vehicle Access Agreement

We recommend that you show that you are assisting your P-plate driver in relation to the conditions in the agreement. For example, by agreeing to help provide money for a taxi fare or by being willing to pick up your P-plate driver when he/she is at parties etc

# Your Vehicle Access Agreement

Months	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	<i>Going Solo 1</i>			<i>Going Solo 2</i>			<i>Going Solo 3</i>					
<b>Night driving</b>												
<b>Driving with peers</b>												

As a P-plate driver, I  hereby agree to abide by the conditions in the Vehicle Access Agreement as set out above.

As a parent(s) of  I/we hereby agree to ensure that the conditions in the Vehicle Access Agreement are adhered to.

My/our role in the Vehicle Access Agreement is to:

## Additional information

Free downloads of the *Going Solo* booklet are available at the Monash University Accident Research Centre's website [www.monash.edu.au/muarc/goingsolo.html](http://www.monash.edu.au/muarc/goingsolo.html)

For road safety initiatives, licensing rules and regulations in your state please see your local licensing authority:

Australian Capital Territory      South Australia  
[www.tams.act.gov.au](http://www.tams.act.gov.au)                      [www.transport.sa.gov.au](http://www.transport.sa.gov.au)

New South Wales                      Tasmania  
[www.rta.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rta.nsw.gov.au)                      [www.transport.tas.gov.au](http://www.transport.tas.gov.au)

Northern Territory                      Victoria  
[www.ipe.nt.gov.au](http://www.ipe.nt.gov.au)                      [www.vicroads.vic.gov.au](http://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au)

Queensland                              Western Australia  
[www.transport.qld.gov.au](http://www.transport.qld.gov.au)                      [www.dpi.wa.gov.au](http://www.dpi.wa.gov.au)

For an online database of crashes in Australia see the Australian Transport Safety Bureau at [www.atsb.gov.au](http://www.atsb.gov.au)



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