

GROUPS AT HIGHER RISK OF DEATH OR INJURY

YOUR RISK

If you are a young or new driver, a visitor or an Indigenous Territorian, you are at higher risk of being involved in a road crash and road fatality than other drivers. Young NT drivers have three times the rate of crashes and fatalities of other drivers.

The NT Report has identified three groups that are at particular risk:

- New and young drivers.
- Visitors – including temporary residents, recent arrivals to the NT and those with a driver's licence from another state or overseas.
- Indigenous people.

The report notes that in the statistics for remote and rural areas, the latter two groups are at a higher risk.

NEW AND YOUNG DRIVERS

The table below shows that new, inexperienced and young NT drivers have approximately three times the rates of road crashes and fatalities of older drivers.

Driver age group	% of all drivers	% of drivers in all crashes	% of drivers in fatalities
16-20 years	6.3%	18%	18.7%
21-25 years	10.8%	14.5%	17.6%

(NT Report, page 43)

There is an elevated risk for night-time driving and driving with other young people. Drivers aged 16-19 in the NT comprised 5% of all drivers but were involved in 24% of all crashes after 10.00pm at night. In 15.6% of crashes involving 16-year-old drivers, there were three or more passengers in the car – compared with 3.8% for drivers of all ages *(NT Report, page 43)*.

These statistics are consistent with national and international results *(NT Report, page 43)*.

Driver education

Traditional driver education teaches basic vehicle control and road skills. Recent research shows that we may also need to focus on skills such as hazard perception and hazard-modifying behaviour.

The evidence shows that driver training on its own does not lead to young drivers having fewer crashes. The amount of additional supervised driving by learners is vital in reducing crash rates. So too are zero blood alcohol limits, limiting driving at night and restricting the number of young passengers for P-platers *(NT Report, page 44)*.

A step-by-step approach to gaining a licence (GDL – the Graduated Driver Licensing system)

The evidence is that taking a stepped approach has greatly reduced crash and injury rates in many developed countries:

- Step 1: New drivers start with a minimum supervised learner period.
- Step 2: Followed by a provisional driving period where they gain experience under reduced risk conditions.
- Step 3: After gaining maturity and experience behind the wheel, they graduate to a full licence.

In New Zealand, injury and fatality rates of 15 to 24-year-old vehicle occupants have been halved since the introduction of GDL. There has also been significant success with GDL systems in the USA.

The NT's licensing system permits unrestricted driving at the youngest age among all Australian states and territories. The Territory has the least-restrictive system (*NT Report, page 46*).

Should we achieve the same results as New Zealand, it is estimated that crashes in this age group would reduce by 180 and fatalities by four to five each year.

What should change

- A GDL stepped licence system should be introduced in two phases to allow time to raise public awareness and to take into account the special needs of remote communities.

Phase one would include:

- A minimum 12-month learner period for all drivers and motorcycle riders under 25
- No mobile phone use during learner and provisional periods
- Double the penalty for driving without L or P plate to \$100.

Phase two could include:

- Minimum supervised driving hours during learner phase
- Limits on night driving and the number of young passengers.

(*NT Report, page 49*)

VISITORS

In the NT Report, visitors include international and interstate tourists, such as business visitors, those visiting family and those who live in the NT but have a licence from elsewhere.

Visitors accounted for 20% of fatalities and 19% of serious injuries in the NT from 2000 to 2005. The most frequent crash type was single vehicle crashes in rural areas. Interstate and international visitors were equally represented in the driver fatalities (*NT Report, pages 10 and 41 - 42*).

What should change

- Building on existing information programs, signage and/or road surface marking should be installed on routes with high international visitor traffic. This should help reduce disorientation

(*NT Report, page 42*).

INDIGENOUS RESIDENTS

In the NT in recent years, Indigenous Territorians have made up 50% of road deaths.

However, statistics for Indigenous Territorians were not as high for serious injuries from road crashes. Of a total of 2995 fatalities and serious injuries in the NT in the period 2000 to 2005, a total of 779, or 26%, involved Indigenous Territorians. This is less than the representation of Indigenous people in the total NT population (*NT Report, page 37*).

Environmental and socio-economic factors that contribute to Indigenous Territorian crash statistics include:

- 75% of Indigenous Territorians live in remote communities, travelling long distances, often on open roads of poorer quality.
- Rates of vehicle ownership are lower, leading to overcrowding and less seatbelt use.
- Access to public transport is very limited.
- Access to appropriate driver training and supervision is limited.
- Remoteness of communities means that in the event of a crash, medical treatment may be delayed.

The table below shows that Indigenous fatalities are higher in every state and territory than non-Indigenous fatalities. They are the highest in the NT, SA and WA.

The table also shows that non-Indigenous Territorians are more than twice as likely to be killed on Territory roads than anywhere else in Australia. Road safety is clearly a problem for **all** Territorians.

Average annual road fatalities per 100 000 population for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians by State/Territory, 1999-2002



(*NT Report, page 37*)

Pedestrians

The ATSB report also identified that pedestrians comprised a much larger proportion of Indigenous road fatalities than of non-Indigenous fatalities, particularly in the NT, WA and Qld. Alcohol intoxication was accentuated among Indigenous pedestrian fatalities.

NT crash statistics show that between 2000 and 2005 there were 56 pedestrian fatalities (18.7% of all fatalities) – of which 51 (or 92%) were Indigenous people (*NT Report, page 8*).

The higher risk for Indigenous people in pedestrian fatalities could be addressed through education programs.

What should change

- Road safety education programs need community backing. A pilot program of four community-based road safety officer positions should be created – two in remote communities in the Top End and two in remote communities in Central Australia.

The officers would:

- work with communities and community councils to make road safety a priority
- help with community programs and campaigns
- help develop community-based road safety education and awareness
- provide an additional resource for learner driver supervision and the coordination of driver training courses.

(*NT Report, pages 39 - 40*)

- Remote Area Traffic Patrols should be established in Katherine and Alice Springs to increase remote area enforcement (*NT Report, pages 60 - 61*).