



THE GEORGE INSTITUTE

for Global Health AUSTRALIA



Inquiry into Driver Licence Disqualification Reform

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Affiliated with



Australia | China | India | UK

Overview

Public health researchers

Long track record in injury prevention and road safety research

Focus on high risk, disadvantaged populations

Driver licensing and Aboriginal people

Licensing is an important road safety issue

- understanding of road rules and appropriate level of driving skills

Important contributor to other key drivers of health and welfare

- enables access to employment and education
- regulatory driving offences are major contributors to high incarceration rates
- data limitations preclude good understanding of issues

Data unclear but appear to be lower rates of licensing and high rates of unlicensed driving for Aboriginal people (potentially exacerbated by stronger licensing systems for new drivers)

Past and current research

- High community concern
- “in most communities unlicensed driving was considered the norm” and “...a necessity”
- ~50% currently held a license
- of subjects who had ever held a licence, about half had been suspended or cancelled at some time

SA – Helps et al, 2008

NSW - Elliott and Shanahan, 2008

NT – Ivers et al, 2011

- Current ARC funded study recruited >650 Aboriginal people from Aboriginal Medical Services in NSW and SA, qualitative follow-up currently under way.

Ivers, Clapham, Harrison, Senserrick, Hunter, Helps et al.

Barriers emerging from research

Identification documents

Poor access to services

Licensing

Alcohol offenders/treatment

[Fear of engaging with Police – remote areas]

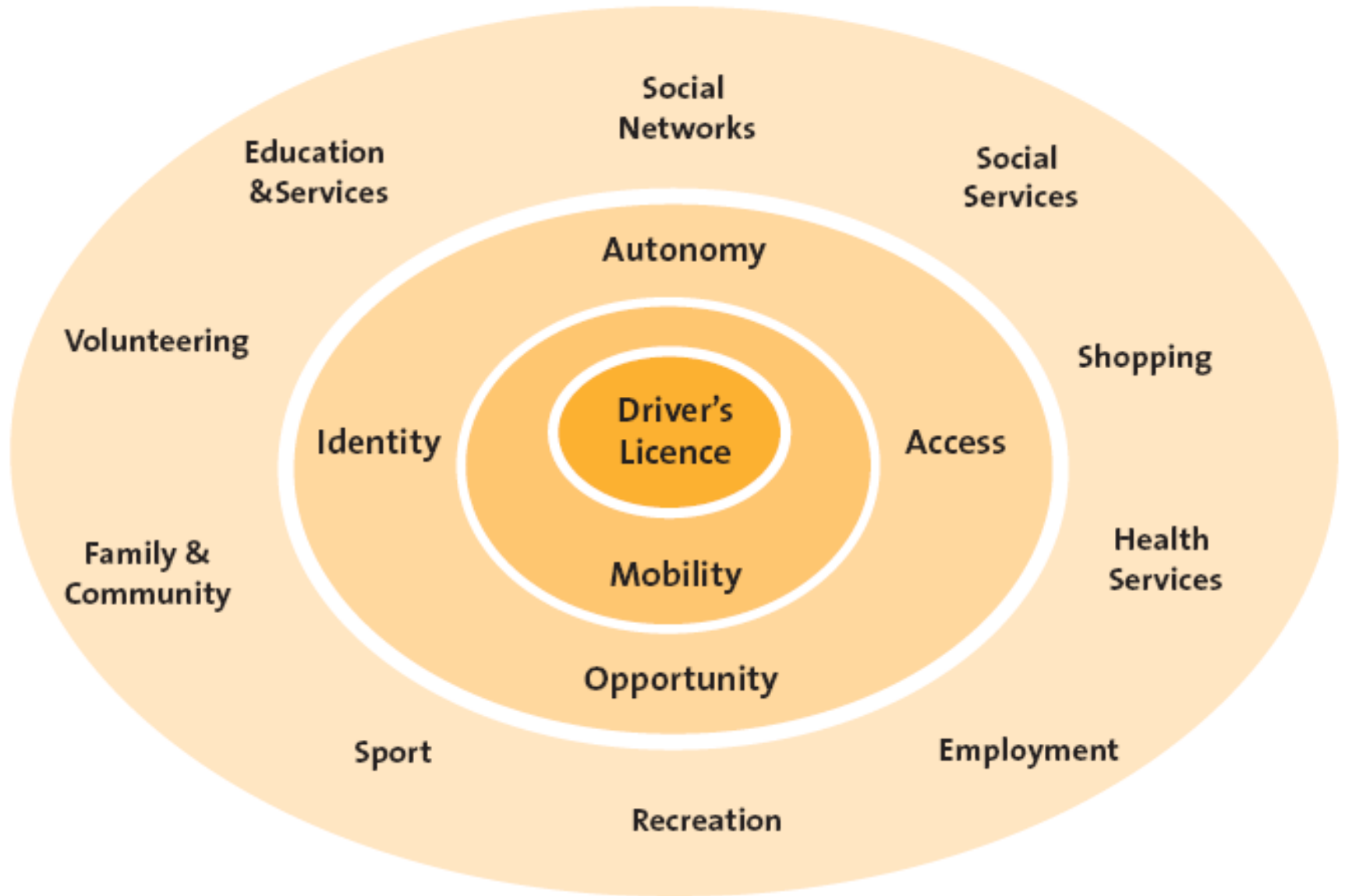
Cost of training, annual renewals

Limited access to registered cars and supervising drivers

Literacy

Outstanding debt (e.g.unpaid fines)

Lack of licence, licensing suspension or disqualification had serious implications for employment



Principals of enforcement

- *Enforcement is a critical component of maintaining order and safety in road traffic, and public respect for and compliance with road law. The weight of enforcement should be directed to behaviours and locations that are known crash problems. (Australasian College of Road Safety)*
- Penalties should be timely, act as a deterrent and related to the offence
- Suspension of driver licence should be reserved for road safety related offences
- Link between debt with SDRO and driver licensing (+ vehicle registration) is NOT linked to driving behaviour or other road safety offences
- Potentially weakens impact of license removal as genuine road safety measure

Issues for consideration

- Driving while disqualified or suspended is seen as a serious offence
 - No real road safety implications when no driving related offences have been incurred (eg reckless driving, speeding, drink driving)
 - Offence is act of driving rather than driving behaviour
- Arguable that penalty (particularly lengthy mandatory periods) disproportionate to the offence
 - Particularly so when offenders have no available options for public transport - may be reliant on licence to get to work, and for work duties (unskilled positions)

Recommendations

- That magistrates have discretion in setting periods of disqualification rather than mandated minimum periods
- That disqualification periods be served concurrently to allow opportunities for behavioural change, and for employment
- Remove Habitual Traffic Offenders scheme
- Remove linkage between SDRO and license sanctions
- Ensure resources available to support disadvantaged population groups through licensing barriers, including management of debt
- Do **not** introduce mandatory vehicle sanctions for repeat offenders as serious implications for other community members

DRIVING

CHANGE

LICENSING SUPPORT PROGRAM



The Program

- Supporting a **Driver Licensing Champion** in each community, based in a local organisation
- Working with **State level stakeholders via steering committee** to develop strategies to strengthen service accessibility for communities
- Creating **partnerships** between local service providers in each community and between State level stakeholders
- Six sites already funded (Redfern, Griffith, Shellharbour in operation; others in community consultation phase)
- Six further sites recently funded by NSW Government

The Program

- Part-time position based in a community acceptable organisation
- Filled by a local Aboriginal person
- Training and support provided to understand issues and solutions
- Work closely with a local stakeholder group and youth advisory group

Program activities

- Aboriginal specific licensing and road safety collateral
 - Locally developed social marketing campaign
- Builds on locally available resources
 - TAFE literacy
 - Mentoring
 - RMS/MOT/Youthsafe services eg learner driver workshops
- Establishes appropriate referral pathways
 - Community justice centres
 - SDRO
 - Legal agencies
- Develops Learner Driver Mentor Program (LDMP) as required



Evaluation

Formative

Qualitative research to inform program development

Program development in conjunction with current ARC funded observational study of clients attending Aboriginal Medical Services

Process

Acceptability, Availability

Meeting needs of community

Outcome

Controlled time series analyses of numbers of licenses and licensing offence outcomes

Stepped wedge design – staggered introduction of program at sites



DRIVING

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LICENSING SUPPORT PROGRAM

*Steering young people
through the licensing system*

Redfern
Community
Centre

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Field staff: Molisa Carney, Michael Bird, Maydina Penrith

Community host organisations: SACYA, Redfern Community Centre/Tribal Warrior, Griffith Aboriginal Land Council

Scientific advisory panel: Professor Rebecca Ivers, Professor Kathleen Clapham, A/Prof Teresa Senserrick, Kate Hunter, Ben Barnes, Professor James Harrison, Trish Cullen, Dr Serigne Lo

Steering Committee: Transport for NSW, AstraZeneca, NSW Attorney General's Department, RMS, Office of State Revenue, Aboriginal Affairs, Baker and McKenzie, Legal Aid, FaHCSIA, Youthsafe, NCIE, SACYA