

# Steering Aotearoa Driver Training Pilot: Research Report

Dr Peter Rawlins

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## Introduction

As part of the Central Hawkes Bay Economic Development Strategy, a working group was formed to look at some of the issues associated with employment, training and education. Conversations with local employment focused agencies, high schools, Council and employers identified that having a driver licence, preferably full, was one of the minimum requirements needed for a young person to be considered employable. It was commonly felt, however, that too many students were leaving high school without a driver licence. As such, a smaller working group lead by Ms Kelly Annand was formed to develop a driver training programme to be situated in high schools. The primary aim of this programme was to give all students the opportunity to obtain their full driver licence for free before they left high school. The intent was to build a sustainable community led project to create a positive culture towards driver licencing and driver behaviour, to teach safe and correct driving practices, and to help make students work ready.

Partnerships were formed between Connecting for Youth Employment—a community youth trust—Massey University, the Mayor’s Taskforce for Jobs—a project group within Local Government New Zealand—and Central Hawkes Bay College. After much discussion, it was decided that the Steering Aotearoa driver training pilot would be conducted at Central Hawkes Bay College in 2016 & 2017. Twenty students from the school would be selected to be part of the pilot, and these students would be supported to get their full licence, even if they left school. Massey University agreed to evaluate the pilot programme and this report outlines the research conducted.

To examine the effectiveness of situating driver training programmes in schools, a research project was conducted by Massey University. Two research questions guided the design and reporting of this research project:

1. What is the perceived need for driver training in schools?
2. Was is the effect of having driver training situated in schools?

The research report starts by briefly reviewing the international literature around driver licences and driver training programmes. This is followed by a description of the driver training pilot. The methodology of the research is outlined followed by a detailed report of the findings from this research. An executive summary is provided followed by conclusions and recommendations.

## Background

Research indicates that over the last 15 or 20 years, there has been a decline in the driver licence rate amongst young people, particularly in developed countries (Aretun & Nordbakke, 2014; Delbosc & Currie, 2013; Le Vine & Polak, 2014). While the reasons for this trend are not the focus of this research, it is relevant to briefly look at them so as to provide a context for considering driver training programmes. It is beyond the scope of this report to provide an exhaustive literature review. The material presented here is indicative of the main themes identified in the research literature.

Reasons given for the decline of young people obtaining their driver licence often focus on the interacting factors of choice and circumstances. Many countries have documented: a decline in youth employment, students staying at school longer, an increase in attendance at tertiary institutions, and an increase in the age of marriage, all suggesting an extension of youth, and the delaying of entry into full-time work (Delbosc & Currie, 2013). Other studies indicate an increase in urbanisation and improvements in public transport supply as reasons why young people are not acquiring their licences (Aretun & Noordbakke, 2014). Coupled with this are changes to socialization patterns for young people, with a reduction in the status of the car, and a trend towards more online interaction (Delbosc & Currie, 2013). It is also unclear to what extent young people are foregoing a license entirely, or simply delaying it until they have sufficient need to drive (Delbosc & Currie, 2013). Put simply, research suggests that many young people do not see obtaining a driver licence as an urgent priority.

Studies also identify that economic factors may help explain the decline in driver licence rates (Delbosc & Currie, 2013). While the cost of purchasing cars has decreased in recent years, the high cost of insurance for young people, and general increases in the price of petrol, results in the rises of other costs, such as housing, competing against transport costs. (Le Vine & Polak, 2014). This is particularly true for young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds, without the financial resources to allow them to obtain a driver licence and own a car (Aretun & Noordbakke, 2014). As such, young people may elect not to buy a car, and may see little need for a driver licence. However, a complex relationship between employment and having a driver licence is highlighted in the literature. A driver licence acts as both a qualification which makes the holder more employable, and, assuming that they have access to a car, a means of ensuring they can get to work (Aretun & Noordbakke, 2014). Aretun and Noordbakke argue that this is particularly true for those who live in suburban, peri-urban, and rural areas, with limited public transport and limited opportunities to access larger labour markets. As such, while economic factors and low levels of income may prevent young adults from seeing the need, or having the means, to acquire a driver licence, gaining employment, and thus raising disposable income, is enhanced by having one.

While research establishes a link between acquiring a driver licence and youth employment, there is a paucity of research into the relative cost-benefit of a young person gaining a licence. While not looking from an individual

perspective, research undertaken by Rees and Field (2014) used a number of models to examine the economic impact of increasing the number of licenced drivers on youth employment in the Māngere-Ōtāhuhu and Ōtara-Papatoetoe Local Boards. They found that improving young people's entry into the GDL and supporting them through to their restricted licence had potential economic benefit for the local community. They argued that, if initiatives designed to support young persons in gaining a licence resulted in a 10% increase in people attempting their learner licence, then this could result in between 250 and 600 additional employment opportunities over a 10-year period, worth between \$6.5 million and \$15.5 million per year. While this research was based on a mathematical model, rather than actual data, and in an urban setting, the findings do suggest that there are significant economic benefits to communities who support more young people to acquire their driver licence.

While the international decline in young adults obtaining their licences is evident, Delbosc & Currie (2013) caution us that it is important to see this decline in perspective. They argue that although there is a growing minority that are delaying or forgoing a driver licence, the majority of young adults in developed countries still obtain a driver license and use and buy cars.

In addition to the decline in the driver licence rate amongst young people, research has also looked at the problems of young people driving without an appropriate driver licence. As part of the New Zealand Driver Study (NZDS), Begg, Sullivan and Samaranayaka (2012) investigated the characteristics of young pre-licenced drivers<sup>1</sup>. Their survey of 3526 newly licensed drivers aged 15 to 24 found that almost half of them had driven on the road prior to passing their learner licence, 14% had driven more than 20 times, and 7.5% had driven more than 200km. Pre-licenced driving was higher amongst males, amongst Māori, and those living in rural and lower-socio-economic areas. Those who drove prior to acquiring a learner licence were also more likely to engage in risk-taking behaviours such as excessive drinking, cannabis use, sensation seeking, aggressive behavior, and had a higher risk of crashing in their first year after they had obtained their full licence.

As part of other work published from the NZDS study, Begg, Langley, Brookland Ameratunga and Gulliver (2014) examined the argument that young people who have grown up in rural areas and have had the opportunity to drive vehicles in farm paddocks and farm roads, are more experienced, and presumably safer, when they start driving under a learner licence, than those who live in urban areas. Despite this commonly held belief, they found no research evidence to either support or refute this view. They concluded however, that: "The popular belief that pre-licensed driving experience makes young drivers more competent and better drivers needs to be dispelled, and young people should be discouraged from the illegal behaviour of driving a car on-road before licensing (p. 159).

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<sup>1</sup> Young people who drove prior to getting their learner licence.

At each stage of the New Zealand Graduated Driving Licence (GDL) system there is a set of driving conditions that must be complied with. Langley, Begg, Samaranayaka, Brookland and Weiss (2013) examined the association between breaches of the learner licence conditions of supervised driving, and crash rates. They identified that 31% of the sample were non-compliant at least once with their supervision driving conditions. They found that driving unsupervised was associated with a higher crash rate, and that this associations was strongest with those with relatively high levels of unsupervised driving. They concluded that more research should be undertaken to develop strategies designed to improve compliance with the learner licence supervised driving.

Brookland, Begg, Langley, and Ameratunga (2014) interviewed 895 parents from the NZDS study to examine parental knowledge of, and support for GDL conditions. After controlling for other variables, low compliance with GDL conditions were associated with: low parental knowledge of conditions, implementing fewer driving rules, young people owning cars, and parents being involved in crashes themselves. They concluded that, given that parents are influential in determining adolescent compliance with GDL conditions, they should ensure that they understand and enforce the conditions, restrict car ownership for those not on their full licence, and model safe driving behaviours.

The link between driver training programmes and reduced crash involvement is an area that has been well researched, but with somewhat inconclusive results. In a review of the literature, Beanland, Goode, Salmon and Lenné (2013) found that while some forms of training have improved students' procedural skill acquisition, other forms have improved driver's hazard recognition. On balance, they found that traditional forms of driver training—involving primarily practice with a driving instructor—did not reduce young drivers' crash risk, and that effective driver training programmes should improve both safety and skill. These should teach students how to avoid dangerous situations and also equip them with the skills to successfully deal with them in unavoidable situations. They should help student drivers understand that safe driving extends beyond vehicle control to the identification and mitigation of hazards (Beanland, Goode, Salmon, & Lenné, 2013). In reviewing the literature Beanland, Goode, Salmon and Lenné (2013) noted a number of methodological flaws which they say limits the reliability and validity of findings in many of the studies they reviewed. They also questioned the use of a crash rate as an outcome measure of the success of a driver training programme.

In a study undertaken in the Netherlands, Craen and Vlakveld (2013) examined the differences between 'traditional' training (n=351)—in which lessons are spread over several months—to an intensive driving course (IDC) model where a student took driving lessons all day long on a number of consecutive days (n=35). Although drivers in both models spent approximately the same number of hours training, an examination of the number of driving incidents reported over the first two years of driving showed that IDC trained drivers reported incidents significantly more often (43%) than those undertaking traditional training (26%). They concluded that this adds weight to providing driver training programmes which are more spread out temporally.

Collectively, research suggests that, while driver licence rates are declining, the majority of students are still acquiring a driving licence. One significant benefit of having a driving licence is to secure employment. Increasing youth employment can have significant economic benefits to communities. Additionally, having drivers with appropriate licences and ensuring that they comply with the conditions of their licence will reduce crash rates. Moreover, effective driver training addresses both procedural skill acquisition and driver's hazard recognition and parental involvement is important to help ensure that young people adhere to their driver licence conditions.

## Design of the pilot programme

At the start of the 2016 school year, a list was compiled of all student who had turned 16, or were just about to turn 16, and didn't have any form of driver licence. From this list, 20 students were selected and they, and their parents, were approached to participate in the driver training pilot. The cohort was balanced in terms of gender and had an equal number of Māori and non-Māori students. Students had a range of achievement levels and involvement in other school activities such as sport. Students came from a range of family circumstances, including single and dual parent families, and alternate guardianship circumstances, such as living with grandparents or foster parents. All students approached took up the offer to participate in the pilot.

At the start of the trial, none of the students had their learner licence. Pupils were supported to work towards obtaining their learner licence through a series of 2 - 4 school sessions. These sessions included teaching of the road code and the conducting of practice tests online. Once students were considered ready, had turned 16, and had all the ID needed, they were taken to the local AA to sit their learner licence test. Any Students who failed the test received extra support on site, and re-sat the test immediately until they passed.

Once students obtained their learner licence, they began working towards their restricted licence. Students must have had their learner licence for at least six months before they can sit their restricted licence test. During this part of the pilot, students spent a day in the school holidays with instructors and mentors that taught them the basics of driving. All students were given time in a vehicle, learning to change gears, get a feeling for how the car moves, how to handle the steering and the basics of road rules. They then went on to receive six one-hour driving lessons from a professional driving instructor throughout the next six months to ensure that what their home mentors were teaching them was correct. In addition to these professional lessons, parents and care givers were engaged and expected to ensure that the pupils received at least two 1-hour practice driving lessons from them as mentors each week. These mentors were usually a parent, a member of the extended family, or a friend of the family. In instances where this was not possible, one of the community volunteer mentors—which consisted of local police and retired men who give up their time to help people to learn to drive—continued to work with the student. In instances where vehicles were not available a local community patrol car was made available for the students to learn to drive in.

Thus, students received a minimum of 6 hours professional driving instruction and 52 hours of practice lessons prior to sitting their restricted licence test. Students also participated in a 9 hour professional defensive driving course that included a one hour practical drive. This defensive driving course was vital to ensure that students were learning the safest driving practises. It also ensured that the students were eligible to sit their full licence after 1 year on their restricted licence instead of the usual 18 months, which, for most, will mean that they can leave high school with a full clean driver licence. In most instances, students sat their restricted licence test as soon as the minimum 6-

month period was up. Those students who failed the test received two more professional lessons and a month of additional practice lessons before re-sitting the test. It was important that the students were rebooked to sit again straight away so that they had another goal and didn't lose their confidence. This extra month of tuition and re-sitting continued until the student passes the restricted test. Participants were supported until they obtained their full licence, even if they left school.

Professional driving lessons were scheduled by the pilot co-ordinator, in partnership with the college, to minimise the impact on the student's other academic subjects. Some practice lessons were held during school hours, however, never at the same time so students didn't miss the same class more than once. School holidays, after-school and weekends were also used.

One of the key design principles was to try and make the cost of obtaining your full driver licence as low as practical. To this end, funding was secured so that the following were covered for each student: the fees associated with sitting the licence test at each of the levels of the GDL, the cost of attending a defensive driving course, and the costs associated with a limited number of driving lessons with an endorsed driving instructor.

## Methodology

The research into the Aotearoa Driver Training pilot was conducted in three phases.

### *Phase 1: Interviews conducted in 2015*

In the latter half of 2015, 21 individual interviews were conducted with a range of stakeholders. In total, 9 learner drivers were interviewed, 5 representatives from business, 5 representatives from a range of social services (Police, corrections, probation services and WINZ) and 2 representatives from the Central Hawkes Bay College. Of the 9 learner drivers interviewed, 5 learner drivers had their learner licence, 3 learner drivers had their restricted licence, and 1 learner driver had their full licence. These interviews were conducted to inform the first research question.

### *Phase 2: Interviews conducted at the start of the pilot*

At the start of the pilot, all student participants were approached to take part in the associated research project. Although students were all over the age of 16, informed parental consent was requested and 18 students consented to being interviewed. Students were given the option of attending one of five focus group interviews conducted by a research assistant for the project. In total, 10 male and 8 female students were interviewed.

Parents of 12 of the student participants of the driver training pilot also consented to being interviewed. In some instances, the research assistant met with one of the parents. In other instances, they met with both parents. These interviews were conducted during the first month of the pilot. Additionally, three teachers—the year 11 and 12 deans, and the gateway coordinator—also agreed to being involved in a focus group interview.

### *Phase 3: Interviews conducted at the end of the pilot*

Students participating in the pilot were invited to be interviewed at the end of the school year 2016. In total, 11 of the students agreed to being interviewed. Two focus group interviews were conducted with 5 students in the first interview and 6 students in the second. Amongst these students, about half had obtained their restricted licence: the rest were planning to get their restricted licences shortly.

The three teachers interviewed earlier were also interviewed in December. Due to timetabling restrictions, two of the teachers were interviewed together, with the third teacher being interviewed straight afterwards. The Principal of the school was also interviewed. In December, 2016

Interviews with the parents of student participants were conducted in the first part of 2017. This was designed to capture the impacts of the students having a restricted licence over the summer break. In total, 18 interviews were conducted with parents of the students participating, either individually or in pairs.

All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. An iterative thematic analysis of the transcripts was conducted using inductive and deductive codes. The main themes are reported here with supporting quotes. In order to protect the anonymity of participants, where quotes have been used, these are only broadly identified as belonging to representative from the various participant groups.

## Phase 1: Interviews conducted in 2015

The following section reports the findings from phase 1 of the research. The benefits of having a driver licence is discussed first, followed by the barriers to obtaining a licence. A closer look at some of the problems associated with driving outside of the licence conditions follows. Findings associated with situating driver training in schools is then examined. The section finishes with a brief discussion of the existing GDL and some suggestions for some changes.

### Benefits of having a driver licence

Two main benefits of learner drivers having their driver licence were identified. Firstly, it helped them to become work ready, opening up potential employment opportunities. Secondly, it helped them become more independent. Although these will be discussed separately, it is acknowledged that these two areas are interlinked and indeed being work ready can be seen as an important part of a young person becoming increasingly independent.

### Work ready

The first major benefit identified for having a driver licence was that it helped to make you work ready and opened up potential employment opportunities. This was particularly important for the business representatives that were interviewed. A number of the businesses were situated in rural areas with no public transport. As such, the ability for the applicant to get to work reliably was seen as an important first step in considering employing someone. The problem expressed by all of the business representatives was that applicants often do not have a full driver licence. While this may be understandable for young people under 18, they claimed that this is also true for the majority of older applicants. A representative from a large seasonal employer reported that: “we interviewed 47 people yesterday. A few went through. More than half of these will be on their learner or on restricted. There’s hardly any full licences.” Another representative opined, “yeah, it’s a handbrake to a lot of people. Good people probably are out there suffering for the opportunity, for the sake of a licence.”

The problem of people driving on their learner licence or restricted licence for many years was identified by nearly all of those interviewed. One of the business representatives from a company that has shift work suspected that many of their workers were driving outside their licence restrictions, at least some of the time, in order to get to work. The representative believed that some were on their learner licence and were driving by themselves or carrying passengers without a supervisor who met the conditions set down by the NZTA<sup>2</sup>. Similarly, those on a restricted licence were sometimes having to drive outside the permitted times to do shift work. “You see, realistically every person we have here that is either on a learner or a restricted is driving illegally because we start our shifts at 5 o’clock

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<sup>2</sup> A **supervisor** must have had a full New Zealand licence for at least two years. (NZTA)

in the morning and end at midnight.” They believed that restricted licence holders were also carrying passengers<sup>3</sup> without the appropriate supervision.

One of the business representatives identified absenteeism as a problem for them. This absenteeism was often caused by people not being able to physically get to work. They reported that, as a result, they had to slow down the production line and this cost the company money. They argued that, given the seasonal nature of the work, and the 90-day employment trial, this could potentially cost the employee their job. Furthermore, they reported that some of their potential employees have lost their licence for various offences and have not renewed them:

*We interviewed in [rural town] on Tuesday. We had 11 people and one person had a car to be able to get to work. Well, you can't put 11 people in one car. Everyone else had lost their licence for drink driving. Because it's in a rural area with no public transport, so they've all at some time got pulled up and half of them, I don't think, had a licence anyway, or were just on their learner or restricted.*

For three of the five businesses, having a driver licence was primarily about the capacity to get to work. There were, however, some instances where having a full driver licence opened up opportunities within the company. For example, one representative identified that there is a big shortage of forklift drivers which, if the workplace includes a road, is an endorsement on a full licence. Another business representative highlighted problems associated with employees not being able to drive company vehicles as part of their work:

*We've had adults in their 30s or 40s, and you think they can drive. But when you chuck them the company vehicle keys they say that they don't have their licence.*

The three companies concerned tried to support employees who don't have their full licences in a number of ways. For example, trying to organise workers on a learner or restricted licence to be on the same shift as workers who do have their full licence and can provide transport. Additionally, they actively encouraged employees to work towards their full licence:

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<sup>3</sup> If you're driving without a supervisor, you can only take a passenger if they are:

- your spouse or partner (for example the person you live with as if you're married or in a civil union)
- a child who is financially dependent on you or your spouse (for example you're their parent or guardian)
- your parent or guardian
- relatives that live with you and are on a social security benefit
- someone you look after as their primary caregiver. (NZTA)

*If someone wants a permanent job um they have to be working towards their driver's licences. So now we're seeing KPIs within the company where we actually help get them through that process.*

Two of the business representatives interviewed represented transport companies. These participants highlighted a problem particular to their industry: namely, that there was a growing shortage of truck drivers, and the current average age of drivers was very high. They foresaw that, in the near future, the problem would get worse, as too many existing drivers retired and not enough new people came into the industry. They reported that this problem was worsened by job applicants not having a full driver licence: necessary for them to progress to the class 2 licence needed to drive a medium rigid vehicle. As one representative argued:

*They're really no good to us until they've got their full class 2, which we can put them through straight away, and we do. That's generally what we do. They come to us with a full car licence and we can bang them straight into full class 2 within a very short time. Um, but as I say they are well into their 18<sup>th</sup> year before that's possible. So, 16 year olds that leave school early, there's nothing we can do for them really for 2 years at least.*

One of the problems for the two transport companies was that job applicants often have not planned ahead, so that they can have the right qualifications to enter the industry:

*To find an 18 year old whose got his head in the right place, who has done everything from scratch is very rare. It's very rare. We normally get them around about 20. They've tried everything else, and come back as a last choice. Then they find out the costs involved and they come to us.*

While many applicants for positions are turned down because they don't have the necessary licences, there were some instances where a job offer was made to those the employers felt had other qualities, and were worth the investment. One participant saying that: "Knowing that there's potentially a good person coming on, then you forsake that bit...because you can get through it". In these instances, the company paid for the employee to take the necessary courses to gain the appropriate licences. Often, they had to do menial tasks in the interim, such as driving the trucks in and out of the wash, but it also gave the employee a chance to see if working in the transport industry was something that they wanted to do. The transport companies often took these opportunities to upskill their workers in other areas as well:

*And generally, we'll put a forklift licence in ourselves, and a dangerous goods licence in the package with it. We start them right from scratch obviously, teach them on the small round town freight trucks...and*

*within about 18 months to 2 years they'll have their full class 5 and a lot of experience that goes with it.*

One of the transport company representatives told a story about a situation where they were not in a position to offer someone employment without a class 2 licence, but were happy to provide promises of future employment once that person had obtained their class 2 licence:

*There was one guy, went to school with him, grew up with him as a kid. He was in the meat works. He came and saw me and I said "look, we're at a time when, we could pick and choose people", and I suggested to him that he might want to "go away for 6 months, get your class 2, come back and then we'll see how the workload is. If it's still where it is now I'll take you on, but I've got 30 people I could choose from who've got the licence." He went away and he did it. He came back almost to the day 6 months later and said, "look there's my class 2, have you got a job, I want a job". And I said, "I'm a man of my word" and I gave him a job. Yeah, he proved to be one of the best workers we ever had.*

Both transport company representatives reported occasions where they had invested some time and money helping people get their licence, only to have the person leave their employment:

*We've got to be satisfied that we're not wasting our money and time on them, and they want to hang around. Because, it's a timely exercise getting them going from your class 1, or going from your class 2, to your class 5. Costly and timely.*

Despite these occasions, responses from all the business representatives indicated that they did feel an obligation to help employees secure the appropriate licences. They strongly argued that having the appropriate licence was part of being work ready.

The learner drivers interviewed also identified that having a full driver licence opened up potential job opportunities. Consistent with the business representatives, the learner drivers talked about the problems of getting to and from the workplace:

*Particularly in a town like here where there's no public transport. A lot of the jobs you have to go through to Hastings, or rural, so you need your licence and a car.*

*Yeah, like opens more doors for work. Everyone is looking for people with the right licences. Like, for instance, your full licence. Might even be a career driver, or then there's that reliability of you getting to work and back.*

One student related an incident where not having a driver licence was detrimental to getting a job: "One of my friends went for an apprenticeship where he didn't get the job because he didn't have his driver's licence."

In addition to gaining employment, one student commented that they thought it would help them progress in a job more quickly:

*Oh, very important. Especially if your employer wants you to take their van or something to go get materials or equipment and he can't rely on someone that doesn't have their licence: so you become more reliable. You get more responsibilities. And, like, I suppose, you can move your way up the ranks higher or faster I should say yeah.*

### **Independence**

The second key benefit of having a full driver licence identified by the participants was that it was seen as part of the process of becoming independent. This came through very strongly from the interviews with the learner drivers. As one student put it: "It's a stepping stone to becoming an adult." Many saw it as something you couldn't really do without:

*It's like, you can't really survive without it. It feels like that after you get your licence. I feel it's like a new stage in life where you have to get your licence. To be able to do certain things and those certain things help you survive in life I guess.*

*It's vital, I think, in this society. You can't get anywhere without driving.*

Comments were often centred around ideas of independence:

*I'm a single mum. So, I will be able to do things like the shopping, take my daughter to the doctors, um, without either having to carry loads of shopping, or asking Mum for a ride to the doctors, cause the doctor's in Waipawa. So, independence mostly, and ease of being able to do things and not having to work it in with everybody else.*

Gaining a licence was often associated with buying a car and the associated responsibility of keeping their car running, paying the insurance and budgeting for petrol.

One student driver expressed the importance a licence plays in maturing and assuming responsibility very strongly:

*The majority of them have left school, don't have jobs, don't have a licence and that kind of stuff. And they're really struggling. They're just floating around and don't know what to do. Um, some of them are becoming more and more dependent on alcohol and drugs and it's having a negative effect on their life. And I think that, um, a stepping*

*stone to getting out of that rut and getting into a more adult life and being responsible for themselves. Like, a lot of them kind of act like they're still 14 and 15 and 16 instead of just maturing. A driver's licence will definitely help them because then they'll be able to become more employable.*

A number of learner drivers said that gaining a driver licence gave them a strong sense of achievement. Some reported that they have had limited success in their life and so progressing through the GDL gave them something to be proud of:

*I think it's awesome to have it actually. Without having a licence, you pretty much don't have nothing really.*

In part, this was because learner drivers perceived that getting their restricted licence was quite hard so passing it was a significant achievement.

One of the learner drivers had just passed their full driver licence and was very proud of this achievement, describing it as a badge of honour that others could see:

*It's kind of like, it's, like an accomplishment getting a licence I think. Like for someone who can't usually achieve something, that's the biggest thing. Like going through these stages is achieving at each stage. It's something, like, personally, it feels so good to achieve something that I think there's also, um, the importance of it ... it's kind of like you are growing up so you can say you've done something. You've got your learners, you've got your restricted, and I've got my full, and it just shows your family that you're committed, and they can be proud of you.*

For several learner drivers, gaining a licence was an important step in making some important lifestyle changes. One student explained that she was on a solo parent support benefit. She said she would love to get a job but recognised that she would probably have to travel to Hastings or similar to secure one. Gaining a driver licence was a key step in this plan. Gaining a licence provided an opportunity for her to become part of the workforce and come off the benefit.

A number of the social services representatives also saw gaining a driver licence is an important step towards independent. One representative argued that being "legal was a privilege" and that gaining their licence would "be a shot in the arm for youth". They felt it showed young people that they were "not just worthless and floating around, they're getting somewhere."

### **Barriers to obtaining a driver licence**

A number of significant barriers to obtaining a driver licence were identified. Amongst these were the cost of getting a licence, the availability of someone to

help them to learn to drive, the availability of a vehicle to learn to drive in, and a fear of failing to test. These are discussed separately below

### **Cost**

The most commonly reported barrier to obtaining a driver licence was the associated cost. This was identified by all 21 participants and was often the first barrier identified. There is a fee to sit the test for each level of the GDL. For a number of learner drivers, they had to work to pay for any fees themselves. One student said that their parents paid for the first time they sat each of the tests, but if they failed they would have to pay for a second attempt themselves. They said that their parents argued that this was designed to motivate them to pass, but in fact they felt it just raised their anxiety levels. The additional cost of re-sitting a stage of the licence meant that sometimes learner drivers didn't go back to re-sit a stage and just continued to drive at the stage they were on.

In addition to the actual fee for each stage of the licence, there were a number of costs associated with the practice leading up to the restricted and full licence. Waipukurau does not have a licence testing centre, so learner drivers must either travel to Hastings or Dannevirke to sit their test. Some learner drivers also reported travelling a number of times to one of these centres to practice in the environment they were going to be assessed in. There could also be additional costs associated with using a professional driving instructor and the cost of the defensive driving course.

Despite the cost being identified as a potential barrier by all those interviewed, there were several comments made that suggest that budgeting to get a licence was not seen as a priority for a number of young people. For example, one student opined: "Pretty expensive to get your licence but people are happy to buy the latest iphone". This viewpoint is consistent with the views expressed by one of the social services representatives:

*Asking them why they were not licenced, or why they were not progressing, and basically answers coming back "no money miss, no money miss, no money miss". However, they have \$400 Converse shoes on, or they have the expensive cell phone in their hand.*

Participants also argued that removing the cost barrier would not necessarily solve the problem. In many of the interviews from across the range of participants, a lack of motivation to get a driver licence was reported. Learner drivers often didn't see the need to get one, and by the time they did see the need there was at least a two-year lead in time before they could gain a full licence. Several comments indicated that incentivising learner drivers to start the licence process early was important:

*You can offer subsidies. You can get this paid for. You can get this payment plan. But if you don't actually work on some of these other attitudinal and motivational type areas, then you're just not going to get too much go forward. The employment carrot is a big one to*

*concentrate on. It's up-selling those carrots and also upsizing the sticks.*

### **Availability of resources**

Two other barriers identified by participants were the availability of a warranted and registered vehicle, and a fully licenced driver who was prepared to act as driving coach. In some instances, students reported that a parent did not want to act as a coach so they were reliant on other relatives or friends of the family. For some, there was a familial history of people driving without licences, so there wasn't anyone suitable to act as a coach. For others learner drivers who did not live at home, there may be no fully licenced drivers who could act as a coach amongst their social circle.

Coupled with this, there were often problems accessing a suitably warranted and registered car. Once again, familial patters often emerged. This was summed up by one of the social services representatives:

*We've got a lot of parents of young people who themselves don't have warranted or registered vehicles, don't have full licences, and don't have the financial resources to support their young people to learn to drive, and to get their full licences.*

### **Fear of failing**

Perhaps, understandably, the learner drivers identified a fear of failing as a major barrier to them progressing through the various stages of a driver licence. Many of the learner drivers had experienced failing the test for either the restricted licence or the full licence and this had caused some angst. One student saying: "Yeah, I found it quite a traumatic experience because I have a fear of failure and I worked myself up quite a lot". Other learner drivers, who had not sat the tests, reported that the mere thought of failing often resulted in raised anxiety. In some instances, anxiety levels were such that learner drivers did not even sit the test for the next level, preferring to continue on their licence and, at times, driving illegally. One learner driver had been driving illegally on their learner's licence for the last 15 years. They reported lacking confidence and being worried about the restricted test, so they had just avoided it. As one of the of the social service representative argued: "they don't want to fail so they just run the risk of being caught".

The restricted licence stage was made more difficult a number of years ago and this had affected the proportion who passed it in the first year. One of the social service representatives who worked in the area of driver education reported that there was a:

*Significantly higher fail rate when the restricted was made harder. From less than 30% failing in our Hawkes Bay areas to just over 50% which is the NZ national average. ... I believe there's a lot of people that*

*don't even attempt to sit the test now because they believe they'll fail, because the failing rate is so high.*

As mentioned earlier, a number of the learner drivers reported that they had had limited success in other aspects of their life, and said that failing the restricted often had a negative effect on their confidence:

*Yes, being that young and having your mind set on wanting to go out with your friends and have cars like them. They're all got licences. That pushes you out there and it drives you to get your licence. But once you start failing you just, you know, you feel quite down on yourself. I started feeling that ... That's why, you know, I hadn't done the test from the age of 17 to the age of 25. Yeah it really knocked my confidence. ... I did it at age of 25, you know, I felt a bit less confident in doing the test. ... I failed that test as well. I'm 28 years old now and I have my learner's licence.*

#### **Driving outside licence conditions**

Many of the learner drivers reported that they had been driving on either their learner licence or restricted licence for many years, and often broke the conditions of their existing licence. The following examples illustrate how these actions can easily become normalised and accepted. A student in her late 20s had been driving without a licence for the last 10 years. She attempted the learner licence test when she was 17, but, by her own admission, she did not do any study and subsequently failed it. She hasn't been back but she does drive. Her reluctance to have another attempt at sitting the learner licence is reinforced by her circle of friends. Of the 15 or so close friends in here circle, there is only one women in her mid-thirties who has their full licence. As such, nearly all of them are breaking their existing licence conditions and, hence, driving illegally. She felt this was justified arguing that: "Yes, but then in saying that, we've all got kids too so we've all got no choice in the matter." She was now in the process of going for her learner licence again, but when asked if she failed it this time would she re-sit her answer was: "probably not. I've done it for 10 years. What would another 10 be?"

Another student had been working towards getting a restricted licence for some time. Although his car had been registered and warranted, he had fallen behind in his registration. He continued to drive but received several fines and subsequently lost his licence for three months for driving unaccompanied on a learner licence with no registration or warrant.

One of the social services representatives argued that learner drivers think that: "It's acceptable to drive while disqualified. It's what their parents have done, it's what their friends do." They went on to add:

*What I often see with the people that we work with is that they believe as soon as they can drive, so they have their learners, that they can drive, and that's enough. They don't have to go and get other licences.*

*It's almost an attitude, or a, I don't know, sometimes its role modelled. Like parents say, you have a licence so you can drive and they get away with that for extensive periods of time just driving on a learner's and um, do that for years, never bother to get another licence. Or they keep getting picked up, lose it and then have to get it back.*

Some of the learner drivers indicated that they had fallen into a pattern of re-offending on driver licence violations. They may have come to the attention of the justice system when they were stopped for a minor traffic incident or check and they didn't have the right licence. This can lead to a cycle of re-offending. As one of the social service representatives explained:

*They get forbidden. In other words, you know, you haven't got a licence, you're not allowed to drive until you do get a licence. They get demerit points. They end up losing their licence. They get suspended. They then get picked up driving again while suspended and end up in the court system.*

This was supported by another one of the social service sector representatives:

*They'd get caught up in the court system and their view was, "well I'm going to take my kids to Kohunga, how can I do it? My partner's disqualified, or he's a gang member, or what have you. Every time I start getting ahead I end up getting tickets and fines, and so what the hell, I'm just going to do it".*

This cycle of re-offending can lead to a criminal conviction which makes it more difficult to gain employment. One social service representative argued that getting a criminal record could be a trigger for further offending of a more serious nature:

*Yeah that's right. But where we sit, it's certainly leads to further offending, um, because, they start risk taking, and yeah, things just start getting out of control.*

While acknowledging that the control and consequences of their actions largely rested with the individual themselves, there was also some acknowledgement from one of the social services representatives that many people didn't fully understand that it can be quite difficult for these young people to break out of the cycle of poverty and crime. They felt there was a:

*Lack of empathy and lack of knowledge from middle New Zealand about what it's like to have the shoe on the other foot. You know, they don't just have that concept.*

### Driver training in schools

Participants were asked for their thoughts about putting driver training into schools. All those interviewed felt that the ability for a student to gain all, or part of, their driver licence while at school would be a useful addition to a student's school experience.

From the learner drivers' perspective, there was strong support with some learner drivers saying it would have made a significant difference to them:

*I think it would have made a lot of difference. I think, I really think I'd be sitting on my full licence right now if they did have this in high schools.*

One student attributed a difficult situation to not having a driver licence and felt having a driver training programme in schools may have helped her:

*Yeah, definitely um ... God I can't even imagine, I would have done it then before I left school: at least my restricted. ... I don't know how to explain it. The relationship I was in wasn't healthy. And probably being able to drive, and have that confidence and independence, probably would have been way better. Um ... I might have avoided some situations. So, yes.*

As identified earlier, a number of learner drivers had noted that cost and the availability of appropriate cars and coaches as problematic and felt that in-school driver training could help to provide resources and reduce the cost. Learner drivers also felt that having driver training in schools could take a lot of pressure off parents and learner drivers themselves. They argued that it was sometimes hard to get motivated to get your driver licence, and there were a number of stories where learning to drive with a parent had been a stressful experience. While generally positive towards having driver training in schools, learner drivers recognised that it could be difficult if it was after school, particularly for those learner drivers who lived quite a distance from the school as they would still need to get home after the lesson. One student recognised that it: "could be logistically hard in a school. But if their parents don't want to help them then who is going to do it?"

One area that we wanted to explore with the learner drivers was whether learning to drive through school might have positive spin-off on their other subjects and general engagement with school. As mentioned earlier, a number of learner drivers had very little success at school. Some felt that it would have had a positive effect arguing that they: "possibly would have enjoyed school a bit more, as there would have been a point." Another student felt that, although they would have liked to learn to drive while at school, it would not have helped with their other subjects, as they would have been focussed solely on getting their licence, rather than their other school work.

While support for in-school driver training was strong, it should be recognised that not all students would benefit from such a programme. One learner driver

felt that it would have been good to have gained his driver licence in school but he claimed he was a poor student and left before he was 16. Another learner driver had left school in year 9, and had ended up in a youth correction facility. Other learner drivers interviewed had left shortly after they had turned 16.

The prospect of having a driver training programme in schools was explored with the representatives from the school. They argued that some student “will probably get their licence no matter what: they have the funds and they have the support.” They acknowledged that other students did not have this level of support so: “to be able to make it fair for everyone, I think it would be awesome.” A strong egalitarian message came through in the interviews:

*I think it would be great. I think every student would have the same opportunity. It wouldn't matter how much their parents earned or whatever. It would be just everyone's right. Yeah, no one would be left out which would be great.*

*Because often those kids who are less academically able, not always, but often, they are also the ones who don't have the funds or the support from home to be able to do those things. .... So, if we're able to fulfil that role and I think that would be awesome.*

In addition to helping students gain their driver licence it was also felt that a driver training scheme would have other benefits for the students as well:

*I think it has lots of positive spin-offs for our kids. Especially kids who perhaps struggle to be motivated at school. You know, it may well mean that they would stay at school to get their licence and that may, it would, not may, it would have a spin-off for some of those students in their further, into their other studies. You know, that confidence they've got, they can choose to work through and we can help them perhaps through to the next stage and we can make it a little bit easier for them*

The school representatives argued that a variety of delivery models would be needed to match the diversity of the school community. Some learner drivers were already in a pathway class to help them prepare for the workforce, so a driver training programme could be included within this subject. As discussed previously, a number of the learner drivers interviewed had indicated that they had had limited academic success at school. The school representatives indicated that boosting the success of low achieving students would be a significant benefit of including a driver licence scheme in schools:

*I just think it's really important, because, obviously, some kids don't have as many skills as others, and I think it's one skill we can give some of these kids to get out there and perhaps become a truck driver or just, just to make them more employable. Because otherwise, they miss out. They don't get any sort of a tick in any area. This is something that can boost them.*

*For the less able kids it's probably one of the most important qualifications they'll get, and that is something that we need to make sure that we can push as much as possible.*

For other students who may be taking a full range of academic subjects, there will need to be alternate arrangements made, probably using lunchtime or after school to deliver the programme. One of the school representatives felt that taking the more academic students out of their normal classes might be problematic for several reasons. Firstly, they felt there might be some “push back” from teachers who are reluctant to have students miss classes unnecessarily. While teachers might agree that gaining a driver licence at school is important, the accountability pressure of the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA)<sup>4</sup> looms large for teachers. In addition to being concerned for individual student success, teachers often feel that their NCEA pass rates reflect their ability as a teacher. Relatedly, the school representative felt that, although some of the more able students might cope with missing their regular classes, it could potentially have a negative impact on the achievement levels for many other students.

One of the social service representatives, an ex- teacher, recognised the tensions that exist around making driver training a compulsory part of the school curriculum:

*The school curriculum, in my view as an ex-teacher, is cluttered. It's pretty busy as it is and I can see the push back from people around trying to get a business case that says licencing needs to go in there at this stage. Yet, it is a natural starting point for it, because essentially, from first year in to the end of high school you could get away with nearly your full licence, and that just so much strengthens your employment prospects outside of that area of schooling.*

They went on to argue that the school would still have a significant organisational role and the driver training programme would still be seen as being associated with the school:

*Allocating admin resource to setting up saving's accounts, to getting a champion teacher or a volunteer to arrange it all, and some of the staff can be pulled to help. So, it is still in the school space, but in terms of getting it into the curriculum, I just don't think it's going to happen in the next foreseeable number of years. If that process ever happens the change will be glacial.*

One of the main barriers identified by representatives from the school and business sector, was the low levels of literacy for some learner drivers. One of the business representatives related a story of an employee he had working for him:

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<sup>4</sup> The high stakes exit qualification from school.

*I had a guy here, and he's still with us, and it took all of the first 10 years. He left school to come here. I kept pushing him, as to why he's not getting the licences. I said, "I need you to get it, you've been here this long you need to improve yourself." And, as it worked out, he finally coughed up and said, "I can't read and write."*

The school also recognised that low literacy levels was a barrier for many students and felt this was an area that they could easily help with as it did not require resources such as cars and driver coaches. As one of the representatives said: "Often the practical aspect is not the problem: it is the written. So that is one of the main things that we help with."

In addition to benefiting the students, the school argued that they had a wider social responsibility as well. The school had had a number of issues with students driving outside their licence conditions. They felt that parents often did not know that this was happening and so felt a strong sense of responsibility to contact the parents so they were aware. It was a safety issue for them, but: "if they continue and something happens then at least we feel we have done our job."

#### **Design of GDL**

Across all of the interviews, that was strong support for a graduated licence process. One of the school representatives reflected on the way they obtained their driver licence thus:

*I think it's much, much better than when I got my licence. I think the system's great. I think it's designed to make the students, or the young people, or whoever, a better driver, you know. The idea of, um, you know, learning the written road code then jumping into a car and being a safe driver as it was a few years ago: not a good idea.*

Support for the design of the existing graduated licence was also seen amongst the learner drivers:

*I think it's a good process. People and dangerous drivers need to brush up on their skills: learn driving properly. So, I think that it's a good idea to have that 18-month or 12-month period.*

There was, however, some disagreement amongst the learner drivers about the length of time taken to secure a full driver licence with some arguing that the amount of time it takes to move from a restricted to full licence was an unnecessary barrier.

Despite general support there were a couple of areas where participants suggested some changes should be made. Several of the representatives from business and from the social services talked about changes they would like to see in the current graduated licence scheme. Their first suggestion was to remove

the word 'licence' from the learner licence and the restricted licence stage. They suggested that calling it a learner permit and restricted permit would be more appropriate, and would reduce the confusion over whether learner drivers actually had a full driver licence or not. They felt that some learner drivers fell in complacency and thought it was OK to drive on any licence. This view was reinforced by a number of comments reported by learner drivers. A number of learner drivers thought it was OK to drive on a learner's licence, so they treat the learner's licence as a full licence. They indicated that this was common amongst their social circles and indeed one perceived that you "can get away with more than on your restricted."

The second area that participants felt change could be made was to remove the need for a test to move from a restricted licence to a full licence. They felt that the restricted test was fairly robust and the failure rate was quite high. As such, they argued that:

*Once they're past that restricted test, they're then on a probationary period for a certain amount of time. If they keep their slate clean over that time, they go straight onto a full licence. Not have to go through more money, and the payment of another fee, when generally they pass anyway.*

### **Summary**

This section has looked at the findings associated with phase 1 of the research project. Two main benefits were associated with having a driver licence. Firstly, it helped young people to become work ready. Participants, particularly from the business sector, talked about the problems associated with potential employees turning up without a full driving licence, and felt that this significantly reduced employment options for these people. Secondly, participants talked about how having a driver licence helps you to become an independent adult. There are, however, a number of barriers identified by participants, namely: the cost of getting a driver licence; the lack of availability of resources such as supervisor drivers and a registered and warranted car; fear of failure.

Participants also talked about the tendency for learner drivers to drive outside their licence conditions. For some learner drivers, this had been happening for many years, and participants believed that that this was a common problem in rural areas.

In general, there was strong support for situating driver training programmes in schools as this would help students to exit school with at least a restricted licence. Participants felt, however, that a range of models would be needed to accommodate different circumstances and aspirations for learner drivers.

When talking about the existing GDL, participants reported that they agreed in principal with the design but some would like to see the word 'permit' replace 'licence' at the learner licence and restricted licence stage. There was also some suggestion to remove the need for a full licence test, preferring instead a probationary period on the restricted licence stage.

## Phase 2: Interviews conducted at the start of the driver training pilot

This section looks at the findings associated with the interviews conducted at the start of the driver licence pilot. The findings from the three participant groups are reported separately.

### Interviews with the teachers

For the interviews with the teachers, questions primarily centred around the nature of the cohort of students, and how they were selected. One of the teachers explained how they had compiled a list of those who had turned 16, or were just about to turn 16, and didn't have any form of driver licence. This list was then passed on to the Principal of the school to make the final decision of who should be involved in the pilot. The interview then turned to a discussion of some of the individual students in the pilot and their circumstances. To ensure confidentiality, these will only be discussed here in broad terms.

From the discussion that followed it was clear that the cohort did represent a broad range of individual circumstances. Levels of parental and financial support from home were discussed. One student had had to deal with a lot of adversity in his life. There were a number of top sports people who needed a licence to be able to get to their sporting commitments. Many of the students were described as "good kids." For others, it was felt that their involvement in the course might be a "carrot" to provide a "better focus at the end, as opposed to dropping out." It was noted that many were "chuffed to be given the opportunity." When talking about one of the students, one of the teachers explained that:

*He's been walking a fine line with his engagement and focus and attendance. You know, if there was one for me, within that whole group, he would have the poorest attendance and engagement within his various classes. So yeah, I'll be hoping this might provide him with some sort of reason to improve.*

Other phrases used to describe individuals included: "he's a lovely kid but this is something else to strengthen him" and "he's not that academic, and this just might give him a focus I think". Of this student, another teacher said that:

*He'd be in a job now, probably, if he could. But he hasn't got all the literacy or numeracy credits that he needs. So, he doesn't want to leave school without level 1, and nor does his mother want him to leave school without level 1. Ah, and obviously, with this programme and the ability to acquire credits through that as well, hopefully, you know, go towards what he needs to get to the end point*

For one students who had struggled with school in recent time, participation in this programme was seen to be highly beneficial:

*Well he stands to benefit a great deal because that's where he sees his future, in a job that requires a licence. He's got a potential*

*apprenticeship at [name removed] so he needs a licence. But he also needs a carrot to refocus his attention at school.*

Overall the cohort was described as a “good selection of kids. A good mix”

When interviewed, the pilot had been running for a number of weeks and already one of the teachers had noticed that she was interacting more with some of the students in the pilot:

*It's nice, the interaction with the kids, with, perhaps, the ones I didn't know so well now. It's nice they'll have a chat with you about different things. Whereas I probably wouldn't have crossed some of their paths.*

Securing the various levels of driver licence carries with it credits that can count towards their NCEA. This was seen as motivational by one of the teachers:

*They come rocking up to me with these licences and I photocopy them: you know, get them ready to sign the form so that I can put the credits on for them. And they're as pleased as punch with themselves, and they're coming back as they get restricted now. So that credit thing is good.*

This teacher had noticed an increase in students not participating in the pilot coming and asking for information about obtaining their learner licence. They felt that the word was definitely getting around.

Benefits were also identified for those students involved in the gateway programme—a programme designed to provide access to structured workplace learning. Once students had obtained their restricted licence, they were able to drive themselves further afield, opening up a wider range of work related opportunities.

One of the teachers talked about how there could be some good marketing potential if the pilot was successful and expanded to the whole senior cohort of students:

*If we could have this as a selling point right. At CHB college, we'll say all students are going to leave with their full driver's licence or something. That would be a very positive spin off for us.*

While the introduction of the pilot was strongly supported by the teachers interviewed, they also recognised that it may not be equally supported by all teachers at the school:

*One of the negatives being, when would you fit that into the school timetable, and then what would be suffering as a consequence? Whose class will they miss out on a half an hour here or there, and then those*

*teachers managing that lost contact time. Some may accept that and go with it and be flexible, and others will be less flexible. And I guess, for the senior management team, that's the juggling sort of balancing act that they have to make to keep all parties happy.*

### **Interviews with students**

Interviews with students at the start of the pilot revealed two main themes associated with the driver training pilot: The potential for increased independence, and the benefits of having driver training in the school.

### **Independence**

The first significant theme that emerged from the interviews with the students was that having a driver licence would increase their independence and reduce the reliance of having parents, siblings or friends transporting them around:

*When we leave school, we can, like, go places. Like, when we have to do stuff far away from home. Stuff that it will be easier to drive around, rather than catching a ride with people.*

Students talked about the potential to be independent and “go everywhere on your own, in your own pace”. As one student explained: “it’s sort of independence, and being able to do things in your own timetable that are sort of important.” Another student opined:

*I’ve always wanted to have my driver’s licence. Now that I’m doing it, I can see what I can do when I get my restricted. Like, not having anybody tell me what to do, and when to do it, ... And just being able to do what you want to do.*

One aspect of this independence identified by a number of students, was the ability to drive themselves to work. The number that identified this was smaller than expected given the importance identified by the participants from phase 1 of the project, and may reflect the fact that these school students are not primarily focused on future work prospects.

Students expressed the view that not having a driver licence restricted what they were able to do. In some instances, this was related to not being able to take part in after school activities such as sport. At other times, it was about not being able to catch up with their friends or being able to get work. While some expressed mild frustration, others said that they had resigned themselves to not being able to do these sorts of activities, explaining that: “It is more that, you don’t even think ‘I would like to’ because you’ve already decided that you can’t.” As one student put it: “you just limit your expectations because you have to wait until you get your licence.”

One student explained that, while not having a driver licence doesn't necessarily prevent them from taking part in some activities, obtaining a licence would help a lot from a convenience and time saving point of view:

*It's quite important because, like sports training and out of school activities. I live 50 minutes away. So, I just have to travel back and forth. And I have to go on the school bus which is 3 times the amount of time it takes to get there if you're in a car.*

Part of the benefit of being more independent was linked to reducing the burden on their parents to transport them around. While some students said that they were happy to have their parents act as a "taxi service", many recognised that it impacted on their parents quite a bit. For example, when parents had to pick them up from "in-school and after-school practices. Once you get your restricted it's like, good to be able to not have your parents come in if you live far out". Similarly, "If I'm coming to school and it's raining I sometimes make Mum late for her work, so if I had my own licence then I could go and not have to worry about making Mum late."

For some students, having a driver licence would allow them to visit immediate family who lived some distance away. For others, it was about "catching up with friends and family that you haven't been able to see and stuff for ages."

### ***Driver training in schools***

Students were asked about how they felt about having the driver training pilot at their school. Without exception, all students expressed extremely positive views about being able to learn to drive while still at school. As one student commented: "school is for learning, and you learn how to get your licence."

Students appreciated the organised structure of the programme. One student explained that: "Like it's set. You've got to come at this date, and so you know that you're going to get your licence by then". Another student offering: "Yeah, they've got it all planned out and everything". Another student agreed with this view saying that: "It helps you want to get it, cause they push you and like, failure's not in the course. They're not letting them go till they pass."

This structured approach was particularly appreciated by those who lacked some confidence in their ability to obtain the driver licence independently. As one student argued:

*Oh, it makes me more confident in they push you, push you cause if I didn't get my learners, I'd probably be thinking it was going to be hard but when I did it, it was easy. So they made it really, like they made me confident in getting it.*

As such, students felt that being involved in the driver training pilot meant that they would get their driver licence much faster. One student reported that: "we get it pretty much as soon as we can: so there's no break". Another saying that:

“it’s mostly the advantages about the efficiency of just getting on with it”. The provision of the defensive driving course was also appreciated: “yeah because we do a defensive driving course too, so it will help you get it faster.”

When asked whether they felt they would obtain their licence as quickly if they were not in the programme, most students felt that they would procrastinate:

*There’d be no priority to get it. And, like, even though, say your birthday was in April, it could be 4 or 5 months before you even start learning for your Learners.*

*For me it probably would be the studying before, because I’m a procrastinator (laughs). So, like I would put it off, and put it off, and put it off, and not have gone for my learners until later on in the year.*

The theme of procrastination came up a number of times:

*Probably, It would be like a longer time gap for getting your licence. Because we don’t know when you’re going to do it, and like here it’s planned. You know exactly what time you’re going to do it and stuff, like go for your licence and stuff like that.*

*Like it’s more motivating. Like when you’re doing it at school as well. I reckon because, like, when you’re at home you have to, like I said, wait for your parents to get back from work, and it’s like studying and that, and since we’re at school with other kids it’s been easier because you get to work with people your own age as well.*

The benefits of working with your peers was highlighted in a number of places throughout the student interviews. Students often talked about how they discussed their driving practice sessions with each other, and particularly the things that they did wrong. They also identified that the theory part of obtaining a licence was quite hard, and they often asked each other for clarification of aspects of the theory, or informally tested each other. In this way, they felt they were “getting a better understanding than you would doing it by yourself”. Obtaining your learner licence is worth 2 credits on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). Obtaining your restricted licence is worth a further 4 credits. During the interviews, students questioned whether passing the defensive driving course was also worth credits, suggesting that they saw obtaining credits as an added benefit of being in the pilot.

Students were asked whether they felt the time spent on learning the theory and practicing their driving, was having a negative impact on their school work. None of the students reported any problems and a number of students commented that they were keeping up just fine.

### Cost

As discussed in phase 1 of this report, the cost of obtaining a licence can be a barrier. One benefit identified by the students was that the majority of the costs of gaining a driver licence were covered by the driver training programme. When asked who would pay for them getting their driver licence if the course did not cover these costs, a variety of views were expressed. Some students reported that; “well it’s kind of like an expectation in life that your parents will pay for you to get your licence”. While this expectation was expressed a number of times, there was a recognition that some parents could not afford to pay and this may prevent students from obtaining their licence. One student opined: “I just feel like parents would normally pay for it, but some people that don’t have the money would just wait, or just not get their licence because their parents won’t pay for it”. Other students said that their parents, perhaps in an effort to make students focus in on getting the licence at the first attempt, expected them to pay some contribution towards the cost of a licence. One student saying that: “yeah, my parents wanted me to pay something.” Other students reported that their parents would pay for their first attempt, “but if I failed I would have to pay.”

### Professional Instructors

Students recognised that, integral to the structured approach of the driver training pilot, was the provision of ‘professional instructors’. While the programme does have some scheduled practice time with these specialist instructors, much of the driving practice was undertaken by a member of the students immediate or extended family, or a family friend acting as a coach. When talking about learning to drive with immediate family members, there was some discussion about the tension that can be involved. In one exchange a student was talking about learning to drive with her dad. The interviewer asked “Does, he yell at you (laughter)” to which the student responded “yeah (laughter). It makes it worse”. In another exchange, a student expressed that learning to drive with her mother caused her mother to “yell” and that “she gets stressed out.” To alleviate some of these tensions, students reported that they sometimes were paired up with grandparents, or friends of their family.

In addition to finding a suitable person to help them learn to drive, finding a suitable time was also a challenge. For some students, it had to do with their own after school activities. They reported that:

*Afternoon commitments take over every afternoon and then, but sometimes it should work. Like these holidays should be a good time to start. But on the week days probably not as much.*

Waiting for their parents to get back from work, and fitting in with all of the other family commitments, were also identified by students as complicating factors in trying to find time to practice their driving.

### **Driving practice**

Students were asked about where they were practicing their driving. For some, being in a rural setting clearly had advantages, with students either living on farms or having friends who lived on farms. One student explained that: “my brother has a friend and he lives on a farm and they’re letting us use one of their flat paddocks.” Others had been using part of the daily routine to practice: “I’ve been driving with my learner’s to and from school with my Mum”. A number of students talked about how they had also learned by purposefully observing the licenced driver while they were in the car. One student talked about: “when I went to stay with my Granny she had a really bad arthritic left arm so she got me to change the gears on her car.”

While there are clear disadvantages of being in a rural setting—for example, not having a driver testing centre locally—the lower traffic volume and needing to travel to nearby cities can have its advantages when learning to drive:

*So, last year, when we drive up to Hastings my sister would teach me everything and then would probably let me drive a little bit. ... And then out on the farm I’d do the tractor, and then we’d set up like sticks in the paddock to do like parking with the truck. So that was my driving. And then up and down Hill road which is not the main highway. It’s like a 2km road in, and sometimes we have traffic, and it’s all about turning and stuff like that.*

Another benefit of a rural setting talked about by the students, was the relatively low number of police. A number of students did confess to driving illegally when learning to drive, arguing that their chances of being pulled over were slim, and they felt they would only get a warning, citing friends for whom this had happened.

### **Interviews with parents**

The findings from the interviews with parents in phase 2 of the research are outlined below. The section starts by looking at parents’ views of notions of independence and being work ready. Relationships and changes in confidence and levels of maturity are examined next, followed by a section looking at the findings associated with the driving practice inherent in the pilot. Situating driver training in schools is looked at next followed by a section looking at whether their son/daughter would have obtained their licence if they had not been in the driver training pilot.

### **Independence**

The parents interviewed in phase 2 of the research identified that one of the most significant benefits of their son/daughter having their restricted driver licence was the independence it would give them. In part, this was about reducing a reliance on mum or dad to transport them around:

*Independence, so that she can, um, she doesn't need me to take her to places. She's got after school things. At least she can get there on her own if I'm working late. Not have to rely all the time on her mother, her brother, to drive her round.*

But there was also a sense that obtaining a driver licence was part of the journey towards adulthood:

*My key thing was one day hope, hopefully aim for him to get his licence. Because it was obvious to me then that was kind of like being an independent adult meant having a licence and being able to be in control of your destiny.*

For the most part, parents seemed happy to transport their son/daughter around but did acknowledge that it was not always convenient. As one parent reported: "I'm currently her taxi driver, picking her up and dropping her off. Um, sometimes it gets to be a bit of a nuisance especially if I'm away."

Parents talked about how there might be a bit of role reversal with the child driving the parent. As one parent explained: "And her not feeling so guilty. Like she said, "oh, you know Mum when I get my licence I'll be able to drive you around, you know." Another felt that it would just be nice to be driven for once: "well, I need a driver and it will be marvellous."

For some parents who had a number of children, the logistics of providing transportation, could be problematic and that their son/daughter having a licence would help to alleviate some of the issues:

*It will change things. Well, just not having to be in three places at once dropping three different children off at different places. So she will be a little bit more independent. If she gets an after-school job she can get herself there and home again. And, yeah, it will just lighten the load for me and my husband.*

*Well he'll be able to transport himself. and instances like today when, as a family, I have three, yeah, three places I should be in half an hour. And I mean, yeah, that's just not convenient. But it does mean that all the rest of kids will be able to have um, get places as well, through me being able to go if he can take himself.*

Some families seemed to be very busy:

*We all work and do different things, and I still have Saturday sports with my youngest boy and, yeah. And I have my own sporting things.... So, if I'm not around to drive, he can do it himself. ...And it will give him a goal to get a job and save some money to buy his own vehicle.*

For at least one parent, having a child who could drive was going to have additional benefits. Not only would they be able to drive themselves to places

but, once they had obtained their full licence they could potentially help with the transporting of other siblings:

*It means that in the final year when [name removed] is at school, she's probably going to be a full driver and she'll be able to take her younger sister to those early morning activities, and it's just huge.*

The issue of students driving their siblings was raised a number of times. One parent was not aware that a student on a restricted licence was not allowed to drive their brother and sisters around. The parent understood that their child should not drive their friends but they thought that driving their siblings was ok. The convenience of being able to take your siblings to school and other activities is particularly relevant for families living more rurally. Two other parents admitted that they did allow their child to drive their siblings, even though they knew this was against the law. One parent argued for the law to be changed:

*The issue is, and I probably don't want to say it too loud in the interview, but the restricted licence does pose problems if you've got siblings. And I would really like to see them change that law where siblings going to school activities can be exempt. So, to keep within the law, it would be really good if the powers that be looked at reviewing that and, you can ask for an exemption but I don't think that would be granted so people end up breaking the law in that situation.*

A number of additional challenges were identified by some of the parents living quite far out of town. Firstly, the time taken to transport students to before-school or after-school events was often significant. For some parents who had both before and after-school activities, this might require an additional 4 trips a day, with one parent saying that they were doing between 100 and 150 additional kilometres a day when this occurred. As this parent explained: "She's relying on me to drive her all the way into town, go home and then come back and pick her up. So yeah, it's a big thing". In addition to the extra time taken, there were also additional costs associated with running the vehicle.

In one of the interviews the parents talked about how they worked close to where they lived rurally and so did not need to go into town daily. While there was a school bus, the timetable for this is designed to accommodate the normal school day: not before school or after school activities. Additionally, they had to transport their daughter 10km to get to a point where they could catch the school bus. The net effect of this was that the mother was committed to providing some level of transportation each day. This affected her ability to work and hence, the family income. They both felt that it would help out on a number of levels, if their daughter was able to drive herself, if only to catch the bus to school.

For one family who had recently moved into town, they had noticed an immediate change in the level of transportation that was needed.

*Once you've moved to town you sort of don't need to taxi them around quite as much unless you're picking them up at night time and um, or you have to go to Hastings for sports or anything you know.*

### **Work ready**

Parents interviewed identified that one of the benefits of their son/daughter having a driver licence was that it would help them to be work ready. This view is consistent with views expressed in phase 1 of the research. For some, students this would be part time work while they were still at school. For other, it would be for employment when they left school:

*He'll have his licence before he leaves college and that's got to be a plus. Because, I mean, he'll find a job and of course, sometimes without um, licences, jobs are very hard to get. So, in that respect that's going to be a bonus for him and a benefit of the programme.*

It was noted that living in a rural setting meant that they may need to travel some distance for work. One parent talking about how her daughter was: "looking to going to the freezing works in the December holidays which is out at Takapau. So, if she had her licence she will be able to drive out there."

### **Relationships**

In the interviews with the students, the issue of tensions between parent and student while learning to drive was raised. The parents also raised this in their interviews. One parent reported that they were: "struggling to do it because, for some reason, he seems to think he knows more than I do." They suggested that it would be helpful to have other driving coaches involved as: "there just wouldn't be as much stress. We'd be a lot more calm". One parent even doubted their ability to be involved at any level, saying that: "I wouldn't have the patience to take one of my children anyway. I'd probably yell at them." Another parent observed that: "it's better with somebody else teaching them to drive because they don't always listen to Mum and Dad, and can be argumentative in the car you know."

Other parents also talked about the benefit of having another driving coach involved:

*No because he's like, "I know what I'm doing", and I'm trying to explain to him. Like, I actually feel I'm very calm (laughter), but then all of a sudden he does something wrong and then it's like, grrrrr. I can't do it. So, it's like, oh my gosh. It's probably easier if I got someone else to drive him and take my car (laughter).*

*Yeah, but he's like, "I know how to do it". So I'm like, "mm ok, you're not ready to drive then if you're not prepared to listen". So I think it's better to come from someone else.*

Parents said that other members of the extended family were helping out with the driver training:

*She's got other mentors in the family that are prepared to take her too. My sister and um step mum, [name removed] mum, anybody would drive with her. Like, she's got other support that would help her. Like if she got sick of mum or dad, she's got other people she can go with.*

Having more mentor drivers available increased opportunities for students to practice their driving. Moreover, many parents felt that this was a more effective way to get across important messages:

*It's good that we have certain people other than myself and [name removed] teaching him how to drive. Because, I mean, sure enough um, he'll take on board what we try to say to him but he does tend to take more notice of um, perhaps a different mentor driver.*

In addition to having extended family members and friends act as mentor drivers, parents appreciated that the pilot participants had the opportunity to work with driving instructors who they felt were more 'qualified'. Some parents expressed concern that they might have developed some bad driving habits themselves, or were not current with their knowledge of the road code:

*I think she needs them: to have another person come in and give her some guidelines. Save the yelling, and especially because we've had our licences for such a long time, we pick up bad habits as well.*

Once again, the notion of having a different voice in the conversation was highlighted:

*I think it's good because they've got a different way of teaching them than what we can. That is to say, "oh, you're doing that wrong, you're doing that wrong". But it's different with a driving instructor. I think they sort of tend to listen a lot more.*

One parent felt that they too could benefit from spending some time with the driving instructor:

*Just to have someone a bit more qualified to know what to do. She hasn't had a driving lesson with this instructor yet. But she said the other day she wasn't ready and I said, "the next available position, I'll actually come with you and sit in the back and be quiet and just see what the driving instructor's teaching you so I can carry on, make sure I'm doing in properly".*

Some of the parents talked about how their son/daughter was now offering them advice on how to drive:

*One day, I went out, I actually drove, I don't know where I was. I drove [name removed] and he was picking up on things that I wasn't doing quite correct. And I thought, well that's great because he's learning through this programme the correct procedures and that. And he said, "well Dad you shouldn't be doing this or should change that".*

These exchanges were mostly reported in a light-hearted fashion:

*She's even been telling me what I've been failing in when I'm driving around (laughter). Especially my mum. She said that Nanna needs driving lessons. Because she knows it all now of course.*

*Ah, yes (laughter), into the roundabout sections. "Don't put your indicator on yet mum. You go past there before you put it on."*

### **Confidence**

Even at the early stages of the pilot, parents had already started to notice some positive changes in their child's confidence and levels of maturity. As one parent reported, their son was taking "ownership for things that um, in previous times he'd just sort of, you know, be a bit blasé about things." Other parents used words such as maturing, responsibility and leadership when talking about the changes they had noticed:

*Well I think it's a sense of achievement for him. Um, he's actually maturing as he's actually doing the process of doing the driver's licencing thing. Um, he's become more responsible I guess, that's one way of putting it.*

One parent was hoping that the increase in confidence their son experienced might extend to his school work.

*I think it's really important for him, it will boost his confidence, ... he's passed it so far, his learners, and it might even help him at school a bit more too as well.*

A number of parents talked about the sense of achievement their son/daughter was experiencing. One parent reported that: "she's just so excited, the look on their faces 'ooh, we've done it', you know." Another parent talked about the changes she had noted in her daughter:

*And it gives a big, bit of a hop and a skip, a bit of a skip in her step um, she's a lot happier, a lot happier to be around actually. I'll say I'm going to the supermarket and she'll say "oh can I have a driving lesson?" So yeah, it's good, really good*

### *Driving practice*

In their interviews, students had talked about how it could be quite hard to arrange a time to practice their driving. This view was echoed in the interviews with the parents with one parent noting that: “time’s a bit tight during the week. The weekends normally we take them out. But yeah, time is a big factor”. In part, this is because of the length of the school day, homework, and, after-school activities. When asked whether her daughter was pressuring her to practice her driving, one mother replied:

*Not all the time because she’s pretty into her school work and I’ll ask her, drive today? Yeah, might not be till the afternoon or something, or like the other night we went out for night driving because she did her things at school and she did something else so we went out after tea in the dark and the rain, you know, and we went, something different. (laughter) you know.*

While living in rural locations complicated the opportunities for students to practice their driving, some parents were not aware that passengers could be carried provided there is a supervisor in the car:

*That’s another hard thing. ... Because we are so far out, the children are going together, so therefore she’s not really supposed to drive the car with all of us in it to come to town. So, we really need to do short trips with her, which means she can drive Mum home from the bus or something like that. But that’s not really a lot of driving time.*

*We, tend to buy bulk groceries so, we only get paid fortnightly. So you’re not just going in to get a loaf of bread, and it’s a long way to do that so, when we go somewhere we’re all going.*

Living in a rural setting, many of the students are more familiar with open road driving at 100km/hr and needed more exposure to driving in more urban environments

Despite these complications, parents did report that they were generally keeping up with the practice and that being in a rural area did have its benefits in terms of being able to find places with low traffic volumes where they could practice particular aspects of driving. As one parent reported: “We take them down the shingle roads where there’s not a lot of traffic so you can stop start, stop, start.”

Once again, cost was identified as a major barrier to learning to drive. While many of the costs of sitting the licence, and attending the defensive driving course are covered by participation in the pilot, there are other associated running costs which need to be covered, sometimes by the students:

*It depends on finances. So, you’ve sort of got to budget on petrol. If you are coming back and forwards to work it’s ok, but if I went to, yeah, she*

*has to contribute the money towards the petrol if we were going out of town like going to Hastings.*

### **Driver training in schools**

For many parents, the fact that the pilot was associated with the school seemed fitting. As one parent opined:

*Well that's where they learn isn't it. It's a lot easier to learn in that environment than what it is at home, isn't it? And they've got people doing the same thing down there and they can, their class, all going for the same object.*

The suggestion from students that being part of a peer group had definite benefits, was echoed by a number of parents:

*I guess, they're sort of, they're able to monitor each other and sort of see how they're progressing as a group rather than an individual. I guess, you know, they've all got to get to a reach a certain standard and as a group, when they have the opportunity to have their driving skills down at the college, they can see how they're situated in regards to the other students. Whether they're on a par with them or whether they need perhaps a little more tuition.*

*It gives them something to talk about, and then they can bounce ideas off each other about what parents or their mentor drivers are doing with them at the time, yeah.*

In addition to benefiting their progress towards obtaining a licence, parents identified other benefits to this peer interaction such as helping student socialise and mature as young adults with a common goal:

*There are some positive things come out of it too. ... And this is not really about getting a licence but um, a sense of camaraderie between the people doing the course. And that's really good for youth have a common goal. So they sort of socialise better together, or understand each other better. So, it's good for that social interaction at school.*

*Exactly what I was trying to say. [name removed] interacting with kids that she probably wouldn't interact with normally. So, it brings kids together more, it's more unifying so it's good.*

Parents talked about how this sense of camaraderie was created and encouraged by the pilot coordinator and her use of social media to help organise practice sessions and celebrate students' success:

*It's great what Kelly's doing. We get a message every other day on Facebook telling us there's a lesson going at school if you want to book your children in. ... Big 'ups' to children who have just done their*

*licence, it's really positive. It's really good, there's like a little family. ...  
It's really cool.*

Being part of the pilot did cause some issues between participants in the course and other student not involved in the pilot. As one parent observed: "It did cause a bit of a friction with a couple of her friends where they were a little bit put out because [name removed] was one of the 20 selected."

Many of the families said they were single income families and finding the money to support their son/daughter in getting their driver licence was often hard. As such, the parents appreciated having many of the costs covered by participation in the pilot and felt that this made obtaining a driving licence much more equitable. As one parent opined:

*I think so yeah, it's a good idea, it puts everyone on the same level,  
Whether you're a doctor's kid or a or a farmer's kid you're all on the  
all doing the same thing.*

In addition to helping student participants obtain their licence, the pilot also provided the impetus for two of the parents to get their full licence.

*And it also helps us, because prior to this we were on restricted licences  
ourselves and has been for years and years and years, um. Yeah. Once  
again, we're way out there. The only place you can get your licence is  
Hastings or Dannevirke. That's a long way to drive to go and do it from  
where we are. But we needed to be fully licenced drivers to be able to  
take [name removed] for lessons. So, I mean, we've kinda had to hurry  
up and get them, which we've both now passed.*

#### ***Would student have gained their licence without the scheme?***

While some parents identified that their son/daughter had always been keen to get their licence, others said that participation in the programme had been instrumental in their child starting the process of getting a licence:

*She would be one of those kids that would sit on her learner's and wait  
until the [removed] hit the fan, basically, to go up to the next level. I  
don't think she would have taken it upon herself to go and do it*

Other parents talked about their son/daughter having a general lack of confidence and reluctance to take on new things that they might not be good at. While recognising that while their son/daughter might not be interested in driving, it was an important step towards maturing as a young adult. As one parent talked about: "it's not his passion to be driving but it's just pivotal getting him there."

In the phase 2 focus group interviews students felt that they were likely to get their full driver licence more quickly through being involved in the pilot. When

asked, the majority of parents reported that being involved in the pilot would help their son/daughter get their driver licence more quickly. Parents talked about the organised structure of the course, the provision of driving instructors and the support offered by Kelly, the pilot coordinator as helping to speed up the process:

*He wouldn't be able to have it as soon as he is going to have it. And also the support that this pilot scheme is offering. Um, even with being able to have instructors you know. I can teach him to the best of my ability, you know, but to have other people on board with it it's really fast-tracking him. And even having peers doing it at the same time it's just really, I think it's working really well. I mean if it was just left up to us it would take a long time to get it.*

The importance of having a group of peers involved in the scheme was talked about earlier in this report. Here too, peer support was seen as a factor to overcome the lack of interest in learning to drive identified by some students and parents. One parent opined:

*I think, just because of her age, she's not really interested in driving at this point and stage. But having this boost from school, and her friends that are doing it at the same time, I think it's a bit of an encouragement for them.*

Kelly kept in contact with the student participants and their parents through social media. Parents appreciated the level of organisation and support offered:

*I mean if we were stuck at any stage we could ring Kelly and say, "look we're having trouble with this could you possible set something up to help with that", and I'm sure she would be there to help us, yeah. Just the support I think that she's getting from the school will help her along as well.*

A number of parents reported that their son/daughter had been always been interested in obtaining their driver licence as quickly as possible. So, although being involved in the pilot might not speed up that process, they felt there were other benefits

*Well I guess the programme has really taken care of a lot of the worry of getting all those other things lined up like driving instructors and are you going to do a defensive driving course, and are you going to do all those sorts of things, and even the cost.*

One feature of the driver licence pilot is the provision of a defensive driving course. Students who complete a defensive driving course have the time between obtaining the restricted licence and being able to sit their full licence reduced by 6 months. In addition to the reduction in time, parents felt that there were additional benefits:

*I think that, um, that's an added advantage. Just the way that he's going to be put through the defensive driving course, and knowing, um, how to deal with potential dangers. And he'll be a better driver for it. It's something that I never did.*

A number of the parents had not been aware that completing a defensive driving course would reduce the time before the student could sit their full licence and said that they probably wouldn't have thought of doing it. There is also a significant cost to doing a defensive driving course, and the fact that this cost was covered for participants in the pilot was appreciated by the parents interviewed.

When asked about to talk about their overall view of the driver training programme, parents were very supportive:

*I think it's fantastic. It's a great thing that its up and running because it does give a lot of kids an opportunity to do this. Financial reasons as well. And yeah, just, and to know that there are people who are out there who will take them if parents can't. And I just think it's a fantastic idea or scheme that's come across. I don't think there's any negatives.*

The structure, comprehensive nature and overall quality of the programme was identified by many parents as being significantly beneficial for their child:

*This programme is fantastic because I think it's giving her a much better quality of licence than perhaps her siblings got who didn't go through that programme. So, we still facilitated our kids to get licences as early as they could, but I don't think the quality of learning for that licence they received is as good as [name removed] experiencing.*

*At first, I was a bit hesitant about the scheme, this is just another blinking thing I've got to commit to, that was my, that was how I saw it. But, actually it's been fantastic that it's there. I don't know, I just felt that there's someone else looking out for that as well. Like, ... Doing all those extra bits for me is just another big hassle. It's all those things that you would need to do.*

*I just think it's a really, really good idea and I hope the pilot scheme goes really well and that it can be introduced to other schools. Cause I believe, especially in our rural areas, that it's going to do wonders.*

### **Summary**

Findings from the interviews with teachers, students, and their parents all supported driver training being situated within a school context. It was generally felt that this would help students become more independent and work ready. The high level of organisation support was appreciated by students and parents and, in particular the provision of professional instructors and a defensive driving course was seen as being beneficial to helping students learn

the correct techniques and help them become safe drivers. Parents and students also felt that having professional drivers might help to overcome any relationship issues that parents and students were concerned about.

In addition to the organisational support, the peer support associated with being part of the pilot was also seen as beneficial. Students and parents also felt that they would be able to get their full driver licence much more quickly by being involved in the pilot. For some students, it would overcome their procrastination; for others, a lack of confidence or self-belief. Even for those students who were confident and keen to get their licence as quickly as possible, the provision of a free defensive driving course would help by taking 6 months off the time before they could sit their full licence test.

### Phase 3: Interviews at end of the pilot

This section of the report reports the findings of phase 3 of the research, namely, the interviews conducted towards the later part of the pilot. The first three sections look at the findings from the interviews with the teachers, followed by the interview with the principal, and then the student participants. These interviews were all conducted at the end of the 2016 school year. The last section reports on the findings from the interviews with the parents of student participants. These were conducted in the first part of 2017.

#### Interviews with the teachers

At the end of the school year, interviews were conducted with the same three teachers who had been interviewed earlier. Due to timetabling constraints, two of the teachers were interviewed together, with the third teacher being interviewed later.

For the two teachers, interviewed together, they had noticed increased levels of confidence in many of the students involved in the pilot. When talking about a particular student, one teacher observed: “He’s just gone ahead in leaps and bounds. It’s his confidence, and really proud of the fact.”

In addition to improvements in their general level of confidence, they reported that the students were very enthusiastic about being involved in the pilot. As one teacher put it they have a “drive to get out there driving”. Part of this enthusiasm they attributed to the student being part of a peer cohort. “Because they’re spending a bit of time together, aren’t they? The defensive driving and also the lessons and things. They’re getting together. It’s good.”

*Yeah to be able to drive and for them to be able to see their friends doing the same and often I’ll hear the kids, “oh I saw you going round the roundabout”, and then, “oh I saw you going round the roundabout.” And I think it’s just giving these kids a real boost to just realise, gosh, they can do it. It’s gives them independence.*

The teachers also noted that student participation in the pilot had: “brought the parents on board” which was seen as beneficial for some:

*We had a few that, like in their home life and that. And, as you said, the interaction with parents. It’s probably good that parents are having to spend that, make that effort to spend that time with them.*

One of the teachers was responsible for recording the NQF credits earned from obtaining various stages of a driver licence. She had noticed an increase in the number of student approaching her to record their credits, both from students involved in the pilot and from students not involved in the pilot. She explained: “I have a stampede with them bringing their licences over to get their credits put on. They’re loving that part of it too.” She felt the driver training pilot was

definitely having an effect on the wider cohort of students with many students asking if they could join the pilot.

When asked if they could think of any students for whom participation in the pilot had not had a positive effect they talked about one particular student who had subsequently left school. "One in particular that comes to mind I was disappointed that he didn't necessarily show a heck of a lot more rigour or interest in anything". There was a suggestion that he may have taken up an apprenticeship in a garage that had been offered to him and, if so, this this may have been the best pathway for him:

*I know he did say it was available to him and they were keen to have him. At the end of the day that would be the best outcome for him, ... Because he probably has, you know, outgrown the boundaries within the school environment and he certainly has a lot to offer.*

When asked if the scheme should continue they quickly replied "definitely, (laughter), you don't have to ask." When discussing what changes they would like to see they talked about opening up the programme to more students. The teacher involved in the gateway programme was very open about her support for the continuation and expansion of the driver training programme. She argued:

*That's why I encourage it, in the department I work in, because I get kids out to work exploration and the sooner we get them started on that licence pathway, the easier it is.*

The teachers were asked about whether they had noticed any impact on the day-to-day running of the school. Both said that they had not, and suggested that this was because Kelly had been organising the students through the Facebook page with minimal involvement from school staff. Any meetings with students were held by Kelly during intervals or lunchtimes. One of the teachers saying that: "She's pretty much been doing it. All I've been doing now is the recording credits".

As mentioned earlier, the third teacher was interviewed separately. He too said that his involvement in the pilot had been minimal but that he would like to have been more involved. He would like to have been involved in the selection of the students, and felt that attending some of the meetings where the pilot was introduced, and meeting some of the parents would have been good. He added that:

*I know that a large proportion of the kids that do go on, just through what [name removed] has advised me that have been really successful and have found benefit from the programme. So, I couldn't pick out any one individual at either end of the scale that did or didn't become more successful. Yeah, unfortunately, even though I am a dean to at least a portion of the students who are on the programme, I didn't have, well I didn't have any reason to reprimand any of them for any*

*misdemeanours. I guess I could count that as a success because I haven't had to talk to them about behaviour or application in any of their classes. Then um, ah, for all intent and purposes, I'd say that they've been successful.*

While the majority of the driver training had occurred before or after school, or during the holidays, there were occasions when students had to come out of scheduled classes. When asked if any of the teachers had raised concerns about this he said that:

*No one's ever come to me and voiced a concern about students missing hours out of their class. In that regard, I guess they've either not realised they're absent because of that [driver training], or have known they were absent as a result of that and supported it.*

### **Interview with the Principal**

At the end of the year an interview was also conducted with the Principal of the school. He had been very supportive about introducing and running the pilot. During the interview, he talked about his motivation for the school being involved in the pilot:

*I think, as a rural school, we have the issue that there's no public transport for our students. Many of them live a long way from the township. So, we think it's important that as part of their education they get a licence.*

He talked about the social responsibility he felt the school had to help students obtain their full licence. He said that, living in a rural setting meant that many students learned to drive on farms. They were often quite competent drivers but didn't know the road rules very well. He believed that many of them do not go on and get their full driver licence:

*We wanted to make sure that they have the correct licences so that if they're pulled over by the police, the police aren't wasting their time and resources on catching these students, who, with a little bit of effort could get their licence.*

He added that:

*The idea behind this is that people are able to get their licence and learn to drive safely and get good support. Not just getting their licence, but in a manner which, students were responsible and showing the correct way of doing things. You know, doing their practice, getting their written and practical stuff out of the road, the correct number of hours and stuff like that.*

When asked about how the students had been chosen to be involved in the pilot he explained that: "the students we chose were a mixed bag as well. We chose

students who were probably going to be well supported to get there and students who would have very little support”. He said that he had tried to follow some of the students involved, and that he was happy with the outcomes of the pilot.

*They seem very positive about things as well in terms of where they're going. Their quite delighted too. Many of them, I'm not sure yet, but many of them have their restricted licences now, and they're able to drive themselves around. So, they're feeling pretty pleased.*

*I think they feel well supported. I think they feel quite privileged as well, which is good. Quite humble being in that position. They realise that they are in an important position as a pilot. um, but we're also wanting them to do the right thing.*

I asked whether he had noticed any negative impact on the school routine. He noted that some students had been out of class a couple of times for driving lessons: At times this was because they lived rurally and needed to catch the school bus after school. It was easier for the driving instructor to come to the school during normal school hours. “I wouldn't think it's been overly disruptive” he said.

He finished by talking about how it had been a community effort and the school was very happy to be involved:

*I think that, Kelly's done a magnificent job in driving it. Police have been supportive. Parents have been great. We've also had some mentors from outside in the community that have supported some of our kids that struggle. Kids that may not have had that parental support and the community, which is excellent. The rural community have rallied around and made someone available for those kids to do that.*

### **Interviews with students**

The following section reports the finding from the interviews with the student participants conducted at the end of the 2016 school year. The section is organised around the key themes of: independence, relationships and driving practice. The last part of this section examines the question of whether the students felt they would have obtained their driver licence if they had not been part of the scheme?

#### ***Independence***

Those students who had obtained their restricted licence were asked whether they had noticed any impacts on their family. In general, they reported positive impacts, with a number commenting on how they no longer had to rely on their parents for transport. One student saying that: “Well it was easier for my parents not having to run me around.” Another student talked about how there was no

longer a need to be “nagging at them to take you to your mate’s house or, yeah to school. You can just drive yourself.” In addition to not relying on parents to transport them, several students talked about how they could now help out their parents out by transporting them. One students explaining that:

*Well my mum doesn't drive so it will probably help my dad a lot having me able to drive as well. Because, she needs to get places and I need to get places, and it's just dad has to take us both places. He'll probably just appreciate me being able to drive.*

A number of students had secured work for the summer break and were excited that they would be able to drive to their work. One student sold handmade crafts at local markets and could see the advantages of being able to drive there himself: “I’m just selling stuff at markets really. So maybe go to markets by myself if mum can’t go. So that will be helpful.”

Some students had not passed their restricted licence test yet, but intended to sit the test in the near future. When asked for reasons why they had not obtained their restricted licence, a lack of confidence seemed to be a barrier for a number of students. One student saying that:

*I'm going for it tomorrow. I could have gone for it in October but I just didn't feel like I was confident. Like that was a big issue. So, like, I just kept practicing, and I had another lesson, and I sort of feel better now.*

Another student talked about how anxious she was, but felt that the support offered from the programme was helpful:

*Well I guess the reason I didn't get my licence in the first place was because I was quite anxious about it. And after, after having people, after having Kelly make me do things it kinda helped me because I'm quite anxious just to do things.*

### **Relationships**

In the interviews in phase 2 of the research, a number of students had commented about how difficult learning to drive with a parent could be. They had talked about there being some “stress’ and “yelling”. When this topic was revisited in phase 3 of the research, students generally thought things had improved. One student reported that the initial practice sessions had been quite tense but that was “because I wasn’t very good but he’s learned how to deal with me.” Another saying that “he’s got better at controlling. Like, at first, he was quite frustrated a lot.”

One student could rationalise why there might be some tension between her and her father. She said that: “Sometimes he gets a bit frustrated. I think everyone does when they are just learning how to teach people.” Another student felt that, as the relationship with her father had improved, her progress in learning to drive had also improved.

Other students also talked about how their relationship with their parent had improved. One student reporting that: “yeah, I started to respect my step-Dad a lot more”. For other students, the improvement in the relationship with their father allowed them to talk more broadly that just about learning to drive:

*Yeah, the programme I think, definitely helped because when we go for drives we just, like, talk about stuff now. Before I would just go in the car with him and we didn't really talk. So, it kinda helped.*

There was broad agreement that learning to drive had resulted in increased levels of dialogue and improved relationships between parent and child:

*Oh, it makes me and my Dad talk a lot (nods and comments of agreement from the rest of the group). He's usually busy. He's at work. He comes home. I don't see him often. But we were forced to talk being in the car together. Forced to talk. ... We're mates now. We're good friends (laughter).*

Some students felt their relationship with their parent had always been good but were pleased that it had survived some of the tension often associated with learning to drive. One student saying that:

*Our relationship was pretty good before it yeah. But still good after it as well. Just little bits when she gets mad. like when I do what I think's best, but it's not.*

### **Driving practice**

Findings from the focus group interviews conducted at the end of the school year suggested that finding time to practice their driving was still problematic for some students, but most were managing to fit it in. “One student said that: Basically, it's just finding the right time with my dad so he can like, take me out. He's quite busy.” Additionally, students had continued to have practice sessions with the ‘professional’ driving instructors. They felt that the balance between the two was generally good, and they enjoyed “getting lots of tips from the instructors while we're doing the practicing.” They also reported that they enjoyed pointing out errors in their parents driving: saying that this made them feel “smarter” than their parents. They said that most parents didn't mind, although one student who was being taught by an older brother said that his brother didn't like being told what he was doing wrong.

### **Would they have their licence if they weren't in the scheme?**

The conversation then turned to the how they have found the pilot with students talking in positive terms about how effective it was to them getting their licence in a timely manner. One student commented that:

*Well I feel like if I didn't do this, I wouldn't have my licence yet to be honest. Because the only reason I got my learner's is because they like, helped us to get it.*

Others agreed saying that: "with all the help and stuff it was all kinda easy" and "all you had to do was show up." They felt supported enough to know that if they did fail they couldn't really "hide", and that they would be encouraged to get some more practice and try again. They felt that being involved in the pilot had given them an advantage over some of their friends who were not in the pilot:

*No, like I probably would have procrastinated a bit more. Like most of my friends could have got theirs a long time ago, but they don't go for it. Um, they haven't been encouraged, like pushed sort of. They're probably a bit too scared and everything. They don't do the driving lessons.*

Although some of their friends had now obtained their restricted licence, the students talked about how it often took them three or four attempts before they passed: often because they didn't do any practice before attempting the test. When talking about this the students admitted that: "yeah, we'd all rub it in."

The students were asked about whether they felt that their involvement in the driving training pilot had had an impact on their attitude towards school and their school work. Students seemed initially uncertain about any impact their participation in the pilot had had. When pushed, most could not identify any impact but this may be because of the nature of those who attended the focus group interviews. They presented as a diligent group who may not have needed to improve their attitude towards school or their school work. Although, keen to learn to drive, one student said that she always prioritised her schoolwork over going for a driving lesson and this had potentially slowed down her progress: she did not have her restricted licence at the time of the interview. One student explained how, since he was able to drive himself now, he could go to after school tutorials to help with his school work, which he found helpful.

Students reported that they had enjoyed being part of the driver training pilot and felt privileged to be involved. They felt it would be good to continue the programme in its current form but could also see that it would be good to have it as part of a preparation to work subject for some students. Students felt that the covering of the major costs by the pilot was good, and that this would make getting a driver licence more accessible for families with lower financial resources. The only suggestion for changes to the programme is that they felt some group drives in Dannevirke would be good to familiarise themselves with an area where they were likely to sit their restricted test. A group drive would also serve for the students to monitor their own progress against their peers and support those that needed it.

### Interviews with parents

This section of the report examines the findings from the final phase 3 interviews with the parents. Firstly, it looks at the findings associated with parental perceptions of increased levels of independence and confidence in their son/daughter. This is followed by an investigation into the changes in the relationships between parent and child as a result of participation in the pilot. A discussion of how the students are perceived to be more work ready follows. The section then briefly looks at the findings associated with the use of social media in the pilot.

The section then moves onto looking at the expressed views from parents about having driver training situated in a school context. This includes a look at the provision of professional instructors as part of the pilot. The section then turns to the common question of whether the parents perceive that their son/daughter would have obtained their licence if they had not been in the pilot. The section concludes with some final thought from parents about how they felt about the driver training pilot.

### Independence

During the first set of parental interviews, parents talked about providing much needed transport support for their son/daughter. At times this included taking them to school or to catch the school bus, but it also included before-school or after-school activities or work. While parents did not seem to resent this involvement, they often spoke about the logistical difficulties of having to be in several places at the same time or conflicts with things such as work. Both the students and their parents used the term 'taxi service' frequently during these interviews. As such, one of the most anticipated aspects of the students having their restricted licence was the independence that it would bring.

In the second set of interviews, independence for their son/daughter was the most commonly cited benefit of the driver licence pilot:

*For me it was great but for him it just gave him more. Like he's working, so in the school holidays he can go to his jobs, you know. He's got his independence.*

*He's able to get to his jobs, because of this programme. It's unbelievable what he has done. Running him around, last summer was a nightmare.*

*So, she can do after school activities a lot more easily, a lot more independently. And she has a job, a part time job so she can go there and return again, independently.*

Part of the benefit of this increased mobility of their son/daughter was the reduction in the need for parents to transport them around, freeing the parents up to undertake other responsibilities:

*Um, it's been quite good actually. Because I'm quite busy with the other kids, and he had academy up in Napier and it allows him to go up there without me. He can just go and I can stay. Amazing. Wonderful (laughter). A little bit more independent and that frees us up a bit more and at home as well.*

One parent when asked about how she was enjoying her new-found freedom replied:

*Yes, well not so much enjoy it: but it's one less thing that I have to worry about. Because, I had to drive him up to the bus stop because we were 14kms away from where the secondary school bus stopped. So, every morning and afternoon I was committed to that, and I work as well. So, um, yeah, not having to do that now is a plus for both of us.*

In addition to not needing to transport their son/daughter around, parents also talked about how their child could help out by running errands as well. Some parents talked about how enthusiastic their child was to help out: "The other day for instance, I wanted boxes and he said, I'll go and get them." Another parent saying that:

*Oh, it just gives her a bit more independence really, having to do more jobs for me and round town. She can drive down and get bits and pieces, you know, she's doing really well actually.*

Another parent talked about how proud their son was that he could take his grandfather to a doctor's visit.

### **Confidence**

Parents often talked about increased levels of confidence in their child. One parent noted how having a restricted licence had: "empowered her to get out and be more independent". When talking about her daughter, one mother said that: "She seems to have come right out of her shell". Others talked about how their children were more focussed and taking on a lot more responsibility.

One parent spoke at some length about how they had noticed a significant change in her son and their relationship:

*Oh, just completely given him a boost. It's a boost insomuch as, what he's able to do, which is drive, and going to do things. But it's also just the responsibility. He's proud of himself and he's um, you know, I'm trying to think in my head if it's separated it out from just his self-esteem and his progress through the last year as well, but I'm sure that it's added to it. It's all part of the growing up thing. It's a stage where they start to be independent and it's totally facilitated that. It's meant that, you know, I feel like it's stopped a whole area of conflict between me and him as parent and child, because he's not dependent on me you know, exclusively. And he's shown me that he can do this and he's*

*doing it. I'm comparing him, in my head, to his sister, who's older, but hasn't done this, hasn't done her licence, and yeah, I mean it could be the personality but it's made it easier for both of us.*

A couple of parents talked about how their child had had to overcome some initial fears, one saying that: "It's been really good, like it's given her motivation. I think she was really nervous about it originally but now she's seemed to relax into it really well." Another parent explained how her son's confidence had grown saying that: 'It's made him more confident because, as I said, he's a kid that didn't think he could do things but he sees now that he can.'

A number of parents talked about how their child had always been confident and keen to get their licence, one offering that: "To be honest, it was just, he came home, I'm doing this. I've got this on Tuesday. I've got a defensive driving course here, and I was going oh, sweet". Another talked about their daughter's keenness to be involved: "Generally, she's quite enthusiastic about going for her [restricted driver licence]. If she's going with an instructor today, she's quite excited about that sort of thing".

One parent talked at some length about her concerns for her son, particularly his low levels of literacy:

*Would he be able to navigate learning to drive, you know, with the reading skills that he didn't have? He has the reading skills now but I definitely think he saw it as a sort of as a rite of passage and I think he would have been concerned about it, you know, being able to get to that level. But I mean, he's done that himself through picking up and working really hard, his literacy is enough for that not to be a hurdle.*

She felt that the structured support offered by the pilot, and the peer support offered by the other participants in the pilot, had really helped her son secure his restricted licence, and this had been a major developmental milestone for him:

*Yep it's reaffirming, really reaffirming, you know. When you're looking at someone who has challenges with oh, just everyday things, it's been a really good life skill that they've been supported through. Not just a school skill, you know. You get your educational benchmarks and ticks, things that are ticked off, this is something that sort of supersedes school.*

Several parents talked about how their son/daughter had failed their restricted licence on the first attempt: secure it instead on the second attempt. Often nerves got the better of them: "yeah, second time, the first time he done it he said he was so nervous, you know, he just fell to bits. But he was determined to get it". Another parent talked about how, for her daughter: "it was a silly mistake, just a silly error of judgement but of course, as she said, 'I admit, I mucked up so I don't deserve to get my licence.' So I said, you need to get back on the horse, book it the following week".

A number of parents talked about how their son/daughter obtaining a restricted licence had sent positive messages for other students:

*A lot of her friends are keen to get their licences as well now, yeah. Her friends are looking up to [name removed] as the semi-role model if you like.*

*I think it was quite good for the younger boys to see that's what you can do. That's definitely another step into becoming a grownup, you know, independent and that sort of thing.*

It was hoped that participation in the driver training pilot would have a positive flow on effect into other aspects of the students' school life. Parents were asked whether they had noticed any changes in their child's attitude or approach to school. Some parents reported that they had not noticed any significant changes. Others said that they had noticed changes but were uncertain if this was as a result of the driver training programme or just natural maturation:

*He's doing a lot better this year than last year and it's been noted by all his teachers. He's got a good role in his rugby too, he's a bit of a director of things and things like that. I don't know, I wouldn't know if you could say it's to do with his driving, comparing it, but he's certainly improved from last year.*

A number of parents, however, did talk about the positive effect they felt obtaining a restricted licence had had on their child. They attributed these positive changes to participation in the pilot:

*Oh yes, he's matured quite a lot. He actually did really, really well with his level ones which was unbelievable. I thought, is this the same boy? But he's actually matured and he's doing good at school.*

*She seems to be enjoying school a lot more this year than last year, it could be, it could be that just after the test she's a bit more relaxed and not so stressed.*

*This programme? Absolutely, it's given him a sense of, um, responsibility, and he's matured with it, you know. You can see a big change in him, you know, what it's done.*

One parent commented specifically on how her son was very aware of the opportunities that being part of the scheme offered and was working hard not to compromise those opportunities:

*He didn't want to muck up the opportunity of the programme, that side of it. But, you know what I mean, he's never had issues at school anyway so, but he was aware of doing things wrong that might upset*

*the programme and get him out of that. Because he knew this was a really good tool for him.*

One of the concerns expressed by the designers of the driver training pilot was the potential impact on students' school work. As mentioned previously, most students had to miss some scheduled classes and there could be a potentially negative impact of their studies. Parents generally reported that they had not noticed any negative impact of participation in the pilot on their child's school work. One parent saying that:

*I'm lucky with her. She's diligent and she makes up the time so I didn't have any problem with that, yeah. But the way they structured it, it was very good, it didn't have a major impact on their school*

### **Relationships**

In addition to positive changes in their son/daughter being noticed by parents, changes in the relationship between parent and child were also noted. In the phase 2 interviews conducted, both students and parents expressed some concerns about how the learning to drive process would work between parent and child. Some parents questioned whether they had the tolerance to help their child learn to drive. In these instances, extra support was organised, including extra sessions with other mentor drivers. This was greatly appreciated by one parent who argued that:

*It was fantastic really, that it wasn't me that taught him. He would have been thrown out of the car by now because I've got no patience. I told Kelly right from the start, and it was good. I said, 'Kelly, I'll throw him over the nearest bridge if it's me'.*

In some instances, one of the parents took the lead role in being the driving instructor. At times this was specifically to reduce the tension of the situation. One parent indicating that: "no, she actually prefers me to her mother because she finds it less stressful." Another parent offering that:

*I think her and her dad have got on a lot better, because he was the one doing the driving with her. I haven't, yeah. I took her out the first couple of times. I couldn't handle it. I said, 'no it's your job now' and he's taken her over to Dannevirke for lessons, and all sorts of things. He's got really into it so.*

For other parents, initial concerns seemed to dissipate during the course of the pilot. As one parent said: "Sure, gosh, yeah, I have more patience, I have more patience now than at the start when I was trying to teach her." A number of parents reporting that it had really strengthened their relationship. One parent talked about how the lessons gave "you a bit of single time, so it builds the relationship". Another saying that:

*Well it's bought us together, because I actually, in the end, I wasn't going to but I actually taught him to drive., Because I, you know, I thought there might have been a bit of a clash between the two of us. But as I explained to him, I said, look, um, you listen to what I'm trying to tell you and you know, there'll be other people that'll do things a little differently to what I do um. So he's taken it on board and we don't really have any arguments.*

Moreover, discussions were not always about driving. One parent talked about how it allowed her and her son time to talk about other teenage issues: "I've been able to engage with him on a different level. He's got a good place to bring it up because, as I say, you're stuck in a car together, you can't get away".

A number of student participants were in blended families. In one instance, a step-father had bought a car for his step-daughter:

*It was quite neat that he actually like purchased the car for her and I think they have grown to be a bit closer yeah: jokes about little things like her car, you know, threatens to take it off her if she's done something wrong.*

Consistent with the findings from phase 2, a number of parents in these interviews reported that their son/daughter had commented on aspects of their driving that they felt could be improved. One parent talked about how her daughter had: "been with my mum a few times and she's not very good at indicating; so, she gets a rev up". In fact, indicating and particularly indicating at roundabouts was talked about on a number of occasions:

*She's a lot more aware of things around her. She's um, pulling me up on little things I'm doing wrong, indicating on a roundabout. Yeah, so it's good. Yeah, because you forget sometimes, you forget, you get a bit lazy.*

Another adult interviewee was acting as a guardian to a relative who was not much younger than themselves. The too felt that their charge felt confident to correct his driving: "Oh, for sure, he's telling me what to do and I've been driving for 10 years".

### **Work ready**

One of the significant benefits identified with having a driver licence is that it helped make them work ready and improved their chances of securing work, not just part time or holiday work, but potentially for employment when they leave school:

*Definitely, yep, I mean it looks so good on a CV for any child going into a workplace. It makes them more available, readily available to get to work and to come home from work. And if they've got a car, it's even better.*

One of the parents interviewed was often involved in employing new workers:

*The first thing we ask is, have you got a licence? "oh, no, I've only got my learners." There's the first stumbling block already.*

Another parent talked about how their son had some holiday work, but there were suggestions that he might be offered an apprenticeship in the future:

*He's working now, holiday work at [name removed] Motors. And he's able to drive whatever they ask him to drive, and he can actually say, I can do it. ... He might have to move a car from here to there, which he couldn't do earlier, and put some oil in it. Hopefully an apprenticeship?*

This was particularly pleasing for this parent as they felt their son had previously been low in confidence but that getting his restricted licence at the first attempt had bolstered his confidence:

*Because he's one of those kids he didn't think he would and he did, first time he got his restricted. You know, straight away, and he didn't think he'd get it. But he did.*

This renewed confidence was credited to the supportive nature of the programme in helping him to get his restricted licence in a timely manner. Another parent also talked about their son being offered apprenticeships: "He's actually been offered an apprenticeship as a diesel mechanic over at [name removed] transport".

Having a restricted licence was also seen as a positive when considering other occupations. One parent talked about how his son was keen to go into the army and was questioned about the status of his driver licence:

*It has contributed to the process for him, because they did ask him where he was at with his driving and he said 'I'm currently on a restricted licence'. And um, he said that you know, his aim is to be a fully licenced driver by October, and that was something that was they were quite impressed with. Yeah, so it is beneficial.*

A number of parents reported that leaving school with a driver licence was particularly important for those in a rural setting, with one parent saying that:

*I can't see any job not needing it. A necessity, especially, I class this college as rural. Different if you're a city boy, or kids or whatever. But I can't see any of them not needing a licence, at least their restricted, when they leave school. Because everywhere, you drive to work, everywhere.*

### **Social media**

One aspect of the pilot was the use of social media to help organise activities as well as celebrate success. Kelly, the pilot coordinator would post messages via Facebook to alert parents that their child had a driving practice session coming up. This was appreciated by parents with one saying that: "Because I was kept informed. Kelly was always informing, you know, he's having a drive. They kept contact with their phones."

In addition to Kelly posting on Facebook, the students also kept in touch with each other through other social media mechanisms. This, the parents felt, was a valuable source of peer-support and learning from one another:

*It was good because she had all the students that she could talk with about the driving tests, and all the questions and answers and that was a great thing because, I can't remember how many there was that actually did it, but [name removed] knew them all and they got in touch, you know how they do on their little phones.*

Additionally, parents reported that the use of social media was an excellent way to acknowledge achievement and celebrate the successes of the participants who had achieved a milestone such as passing their learner licence or obtaining their restricted licence. This, they felt, helped to encourage other participants to continue to work towards their goals:

*Oh yeah, and just the encouragement they got was just fantastic, I can't say enough about Kelly. She's just been terrific through the whole process. And little reminders every now and again for the children. Just gives them a bit of a buzz when there's a picture on Facebook of her with one of the children whoever's passed their restricted. And it gives the kids a buzz as well you know. How proud, you know, she's been. Like the big mother duck with all these baby ducks really. It's been great.*

Parents felt that the use of social media help create a community that encouraged everyone to succeed:

*Well you know it's enhanced his credibility too, with his peer group, I think it's cool, the whole aspect of it how they're going on alongside each other as they've been featured on the facebook page, yoohoo. Look at me, it's ah, another sort of peer group. It's created another peer group that he wasn't, he wouldn't have been a part of. And you know that goes for going and doing the courses as well as the online presence of Kelly. Hey guys, this is the, um, a bunch of you kids all working on the same thing.*

### *Driver training in schools*

Parents were asked for their thought about the provision of driver training in schools. As identified elsewhere in this report, schools were naturally identified as places of learning, by both students and parents. So, for many it seemed logical to situate driver training in schools. As one parent opined:

*I think it should be. I mean, school is not just about reading and writing these days. It's totally different. It should be teaching them other sorts of life skills.*

Another parent felt that the responsibility to make this happen should lie with central government, saying that: "I think that's a minimum, the government needs to step up." Schools are self-governing bodies, however, and so the decision whether to include driver training programmes rests with the individual schools. So, while central government might encourage schools to have driver training programmes, they cannot mandate it. Despite this there was strong support for the inclusion of driver training in schools in one form or another, summed up by one parent who felt: "yes that would be brilliant wouldn't it".

During the pilot, driving lessons were organised with one of the professional driving instructors. These mostly occurred during the school holidays, where entire days were set aside for practice. Additional sessions were organised either before or after school, at lunchtimes, and in some instances students missed some classes to attend practice sessions. The school operated on a six-day timetable so this helped to minimise students missing out on the same subject. Part of the reason why students were taken out of class was to sit their restricted test. In general, parents didn't see this as a major disruption with one saying that:

*We did talk about what classes we were going to miss on the day of your test. As I learned, there was always ways around that and ways to make up what he was going to be missing. ... I can kind of see that there may be some conflict if they're meant to be in certain classes and they are needing to do this as well, but if this was made part of the [school], and they weren't going to be compromised in other classes then there's really no disadvantage. I think that, I think it's just great, I think it's great that he was able to do it. I think it was just fantastic for him, he wasn't disadvantaged in anyway whatsoever, if anything it's been a plus, it's been an added.*

An alternative model for the driver training programme would be for it to be part of a preparation for work subject that students could take as one of their subject choices. While it is recognised that this will not suit all students, particularly those who have aspirations for tertiary study, there are many students who might benefit from this model. When asked, many parents agreed that including it in a preparation for work subject was a good idea. One parent very much identified driving as a trade arguing that it was "as much as any other

sort of skills based subject, like woodwork and metalwork. Driving is a trade, it can be a trade. So, I think, yeah, definitely.”

Other parents felt that the design of the current pilot scheme was preferable to being part of a subject:

*I don't think it should be like, a subject, but I think they should be given the opportunity to take it like they just did. You know like you guys set this up, you know, I thought that was cool.*

### **Professional Instructors**

The parents talked a lot about how much they appreciated the provision of professional driving instructors in the pilot. Many of the parents were concerned that they might have picked up some bad habits and were concerned about passing these on to their son/daughter. They felt that the instructors would be more up to date with the road rules, teaching techniques, and terminology. As one parent put it:

*It's all very well as parents to teach your child to drive but you know, sometimes we have our own little bad habits, you know. One hand on the wheel, you know, ... And so I sort of feel through getting proper driving instructors, like that has made her more confident in her driving.*

One reason why the parents thought the professional instructors were influential was that it was someone else's voice in the conversation. This served two main purposes. Firstly, having multiple people involved in the driving instruction often meant that “they're picking up different things they're doing wrong”. Secondly, the information was often received better when it was offered by someone other than a parent, with one saying that: “They can accept it a lot easier because it's not their mother or their father, or whoever they're annoyed at, telling them what to do”. At times, parents perceived that the message they were giving was exactly the same as the one given by the instructors. One parent talked about how:

*I appreciated the help of her going for those lessons because, yeah, sometimes your children don't think you know anything. You try to tell them something and they like, don't take it on board. But when they hear it from someone else they know it is actually right. I'm a bit nervous sometimes with some of her driving and she thinks I'm being over cautious or something. You know, teaching defensively, you know, watching out for others. It's not just about you. And then, low and behold, she came back from one of her lessons and they covered that sort of thing, and yes, I was right.*

In addition to the depth of content and teaching knowledge attributed to the instructors, the nature of the interactions between instructor and student were

also important. A number of the parents spoke in very glowing terms about the instructor their son/daughter had worked with, one offering that:

*The driver guy was really good, [name removed] couldn't speak highly enough of the driving instructor himself. And when he was down in Dannevirke, and when I met him when [name removed] went for his licence, and he was very good to deal with. He seemed like, he knew how to approach, [name removed], you know what I mean. Like he was, yeah, just the way he conducted it. He was very good. I think he was very respectful of the kids and in turn [name removed] was respectful towards him.*

Overall, the provision of professional driving instructors was seen as a really important aspect of the pilot. In addition to the knowledge they held, and the way they conveyed that knowledge to the students, the support they offered parents was also appreciated:

*He passed with flying colours, that's what the instructor said, he didn't get any marks wrong or anything and we both accredited it to his driving instructor that he had previously, because he was excellent. He was fantastic. He was just really fantastic. And in that we got confidence in driving with each other, and me taking him. And so, the whole process, with us communicating, and when he passed, and how proud he was of himself, and that it worked, and it was great, and it was a good experience for him. It had a positive impact on us too. Especially, because we would argue quite hard in the driving um, scenarios but with the instructor's support with this programme it's made it a lot easier. I would recommend it to other people.*

#### ***Would they have their licence if they were not in the scheme?***

Parents were asked whether their son/daughter would have obtained their licence as quickly if they were not in the pilot. Many parents acknowledged that the pilot had indeed helped speed up the process. In some instances, this was because the parent felt that the student would not have initiated getting a driver licence. As one parent put it: "No, no, I can tell you now, she wouldn't. She wouldn't have even considered doing it. Another parent said:

*I don't think she would have been going for her licence if it hadn't been for Kelly doing this though, her being picked out for this course. You know, she's just one of those kids who wouldn't bother going for it.*

In other instances, parents felt the process would have taken a lot longer, one offering that: "No, she wouldn't have had her licence by now. I don't think she would have had her learner's by now".

As discussed earlier, some parents reported that their involvement in the scheme both sped up the process and helped mitigate some of the tensions between parent and child:

*If he wasn't doing this he wouldn't have done as quick, it wouldn't have been an enjoyable experience for him, I don't think because, I would have probably been moaning more about it all, you know what I mean.*

For others, the structure and support offered by the scheme facilitated the timely obtaining of a driver licence. One parent felt that they did not know enough about the GDL to help their child through the process:

*No, no, no, because I wouldn't have had, I wouldn't have been able to navigate the information out there really. ... I wouldn't consider myself backward, but knowing, um, having the timeframes pointed out and shown and reminders, yeah, time gets away on you.*

One parent reported that the fact that their son had secured his restricted licence placed him at an advantage over some of his older peers:

*He's in the [sports team] and there's several of the boys in there that are in the 7th form that have got nothing. You know they're leaving school, they haven't even got their learners or anything. Like, "oh, I don't need it yet". Well the process takes so long now, if you don't start it early. Who wants to employ you when you can't get to work?*

For some parents, although they expressed that participation in the scheme had not significantly sped up the process of their child obtaining their licence, it had been beneficial for their child. As one parent said:

*Oh, I think we still would have got there but from my point of view, having the driving lessons and doing it you know through someone else has been more of a benefit for him, I think, than me teaching him*

Regardless of whether participation in the pilot had reduced the amount of time their child had taken to get their licence, having a full driver licence by the time they left school was acknowledged as a valuable milestone of becoming an adult: As one parent put it:

*[He] is 16/17 and he's already got the first box ticked you know. And that's something. If you can walk away from the school with that, as well as everything else that goes along with school, you're going to be able to grasp the world.*

### **Fantastic scheme**

When asked what suggestions the parents had for any changes to the scheme, most parents felt that the scheme was extremely beneficial in its current form.

Phases such as a “brilliant initiative” and ‘an awesome scheme”. To finish off this section of the report we will let the parents’ voices speak:

*I think it's awesome, no I don't think there's any changes. ... I think it's worked It's worked well for us anyway.*

*It was a wonderful achievement that's been done and I just hope it does continue for further generations. well.*

*I hope it's available when my daughter comes through yeah because it would benefit her more than it did [name removed].*

*I'd support any, any efforts to make it available for everybody*

*The whole thing, the whole managing it, the whole independence the whole decision making, ..., the part he had to play in it and be committed to it. I just think it's fantastic*

*Definitely, definitely, it was just a good experience for him and I'm glad he did it and he's happy and I'm happy about it. I think it's great and I would like to see the boys, the other two younger boys be able to do it.*

*Just that I'm very grateful for it for him, and I am I'm very grateful.*

*Yeah, it's great actually. We're quite, you know, honoured to have been selected to be in this scheme.*

*And I think it's a great idea, actually, doing it through the school. Because everyone is together as one. Like there's 20 kids doing it that [name removed] knows and they're all become better mates if you like.*

*This is a start. So, it's great, you know, if you could do it annually. Fantastic. I think it's great for kids to have a licence to get to jobs. You see, that's quite a big thing.*

*I'd just like to say you guys have done a tremendous job. The whole team, that's been wonderful. Kelly, and the police on board, and the driving instructors and that. The whole process has just been wonderful and I just hope that it opens up to years further on, so that many students each year can go through this process, because it is beneficial to them.*

*I just think expanding it would be fantastic. We've got lots of friends who weren't on it that are aggrieved, and wished they were on it.*

*It should be a must, you know. Not just through this school, um, all over New Zealand. It should be introduced to every school, and be available for all kids. It would be a shame if it was pure chance if you were supported through your licence or not.*

### *Summary*

In summary, the students, parents and the school felt that the pilot had been extremely beneficial to helping the students progress quickly through the GDL process and helped to develop their sense of independence. The freedom that this increased independence offered opened up opportunities for students to more easily participate in before-school and after-school activities and work. It also allowed them to take up holiday work further afield, and also opened up possibilities for work once they left school.

In addition to the increased levels of independence as a result of participation in the pilot, higher levels of confidence amongst the students were noted by the school, and particularly the parents. Parents and students also noted that most of the tension associated with parents teaching their children to drive had alleviated, and there were numerous stories of how some relationships had been enhanced through the process. In addition to enhanced relationships between parent and child, it was also noted that the participant group had really become a community. This was partially attributed to the use of social media to organise the pilot and celebrate the success of the participants.

Overall, all participants felt that situating driver training in a school context had been successful. The pilot was well organised and had supported both the students and the parents. Part of this support was the provision of professional instructors which parents and students, in particular, felt had really enhanced their son/daughter's learning to drive experience. The design and implementation of the pilot received high praise and continuation and expansion of the scheme was enthusiastically endorsed.

## Executive summary

The following executive summary is organised around the two research questions that guided this research.

### *What is the perceived need for driver training in schools?*

Findings from the phase one interviews conducted in 2015 establish that there is a need to support young people to obtain their driver licence. Participants in this phase of the research identified that one of the main reasons why young people need to get a driver licence is to be work ready and increase their chances of gaining employment. For some, this will primarily be about managing to physically get themselves to work. This is particularly true for those living rurally or who have to travel some distance to work. For others, it will be because it is needed as part of their work, either because they are specifically going into a transport oriented career, or because they need to use company vehicles as part of their work. Living in a rural context means that many of the jobs available require some form of driving. Increasing the number of young adults in employment could bring a significant benefit to communities (Rees & Field, 2014). The problem identified by the business representative is that young people are not planning ahead and securing their licence at the earliest opportunity. As such, many of them are turning up for job interviews without a licence, which can limit their options significantly.

Coupled with the finding that having a driver licence makes you more employable is the independence that having a driver licence brings. Many participants talked about how increased levels of independence allows them to undertake a range of activities without being reliant on someone else to drive them around. In addition to work, this may be to do everyday tasks such as grocery shopping or going to the doctor, but it also allows you to stay connected with family, or travel further afield for study.

Many learner drivers, however, are not securing their full driving licence. For some, fear of failure was a limiting factor, for others cost can be a barrier. Studies from overseas have identified that economic factors can impede young people obtaining a driver licence (Aretun & Nordbakke, 2014; Delbosc & Currie, 2013; Le Vine & Polak, 2014). Other students simply expressed that they were happy to drive on either their learner licence or restricted licence for many years. This view is consistent with findings by Begg, Sullivan and Samaranayaka (2012) who found a reasonable proportion of learner drivers driving on the wrong licence. The current research also identified that there seemed to be some familial patterns of people driving on the 'wrong' licence. Regardless of the reasons, driving outside the licence conditions can cause significant problems, preventing people from getting ahead. Although, living in a rural area means that the chances of getting caught without the appropriate licence are diminished, those who do can get into a cycle of criminal convictions, fines and loss of licence. They are also at an increased risk of having vehicle accidents (Langley, Begg, Samaranayaka, Brookland & Weiss, 2013)

Taken together, these findings all support the need for young people to be supported to get their driver licence in a timely manner and while this could be

accomplished by having independent agencies undertaking driver training, it seems more logical to situate these programmes in schools. With student staying longer in schools, situating driver training within a school context will capture a significant proportion of 16 year olds, and potentially redress the decline in your people obtaining their driver licence (Aretun & Nordbakke, 2014; Delbosc & Currie, 2013; Le Vine & Polak, 2014).

### *Was is the effect of having driver training situated in schools?*

Phase 2 and phase 3 of the research examined the effect of the driver training pilot in schools. Findings from these phases of the research all support the continuation and expansion of driver training in schools. Participation in the pilot: increased students' independence, helped make them work ready, increased the confidence levels of students, helped improve relationships between parent and child, and supported student to get their licence faster. Aspects of the pilot that were most appreciated were: the structure and peer support offered by the programme, the provision of professional instructors, and the reductions in costs. These aspects will be discussed more below.

One of the most anticipated aspects of being involved in the pilot was that it would increase students' independence and reduce the need for parents to act as a 'taxi service'. Living in a rural area meant that many student need help either getting to school, or taking part in before-school or after school-activities and work. Much of the burden for this transportation fell on parents, who, while generally happy to help, often found the job logistically difficult and costly. Findings from phase 3 of the research identified that having a driver licence, albeit a restricted driver licence, did increase students' independence. In addition to student participants being able to transport themselves to school and other activities, there was also an increase in their sense of self-determination. They were now able to make choices that were not previously open to them. Also, as consequence of them having a restricted licence, they were now more able to undertake work. For some this was part-time work or holiday work. For others, having a driver licence was potentially opening up opportunities for employment once they left school.

One of the significant effects of participation in the driver training pilot was an increase in confidence and a general maturation of the students. While some students always projected as confident individuals, many did not. Many parents in phase 3 of the project clearly identified that participation had helped their son/daughter to overcome a lack of confidence and self-belief, and a number talked about how this renewed confidence had extended to their school work. Many talked about how much growth they had seen in their child. While some of this may be due to other factors such as the natural maturation process, a number of parents attributed this directly to involvement in the pilot.

In addition to increased confidence, many students and parents talked about improvements in the relationship between them. Early concerns about tensions between parents teaching their children to drive were generally resolved. In some instances, this was because another parent or mentor became involved in

the driving practices. But, there were numerous accounts of instances where the relationship between parent and child had been enhanced. This sometimes extended to parent and child talking more broadly about aspect of adolescence.

One thing appreciated by all of the students and their parents was the structured nature of the driver training pilot. Students talked about being well supported through the various stages of the GDL process. They knew that if they did not acquire a learner or restricted licence at the first attempt they would be encouraged and supported to have a second attempt in a timely manner. In part, this support came through being part of a peer group where everyone was working towards the same goal. Students could discuss progress with one another and share lessons they had learned from their driving practice. Additionally, the use of social media to help organise sessions and celebrate success helped to keep the students enthused and moving through the GDL process. It was also noted that situating the driver training pilot in the school helped to normalise obtaining your driver licence as soon as you could. It was noted that an increasing number of students from outside the pilot were seeking information about how to get a driver licence and registration of their credits on the NQF once they had obtained levels of the GDL.

Parents too appreciated the structured nature of the pilot. In particular, they found value in having the 'professional' drivers involved. Some parents were anxious that they may have picked up 'bad habits' and appreciated having other mentors to ensure that students learned to drive correctly. Even if they were showing the student the correct way to drive parents felt that the messages were often received more effectively if they came from the professional instructor. The involvement of parents and particularly the modelling of safe driving behaviours has been identified as important aspects of effective driver training programmes Brookland, Begg, Langley, and Ameratunga (2014).

Parents and students all felt that participation in the driver training pilot would help them to secure their full driving licence in a timely manner. For some students, participation had prompted them to get started on their licence. Some felt that they would have procrastinated, while others felt that they lacked confidence and being involved in the pilot had given them a nudge to get started. Similar views of procrastination and lack of confidence were also reported by the parents.

Other students had always been keen to get their licence as quickly as they could, but also felt that their participation in the pilot would help ensure that they did. In part, this was because of the provision of the free defensive driving course which would shorten the time they needed to be in the restricted licence before they could sit their full licence test. A number of students and parents did not think that they would have been able to afford, or may not have thought of taking, a defensive driving course if they had not been involved in the pilot.

Cost was consistently identified as a major barrier to obtaining a driver licence. In phase 1 of the research, all those interviewed talked about the high cost of passing through the GDL. Despite this high cost, there were suggestions from the

social services representatives and one student that budgeting for obtaining a driver licence was not a priority for all students. Cost was also highlighted as a barrier in both phase 2 and phase 3 of the research. As such having the major costs covered by the pilot was seen as a significant benefit of participation in the pilot. Students and parents talked about how having to pay for it themselves may have prevented them from starting the GDL process, or progressing through the licencing process as quickly. Of particular note is the fact that a defensive driving course is included and paid for. Not only does this shorten the period a student needs to be on a restricted licence, it was also seen as helping students to develop hazard recognition and avoidance and is consistent with the design of driver training programmes advocated by Beanland, Goode, Salmon and Lenné (2013).

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

In conclusion, the Aotearoa Driver Training pilot conducted at Central Hawkes Bay College in 2016 and 2017 was highly effective at helping students progress through the GDL. The pilot was well designed and implemented and participants felt supported and encouraged to get their driver licence. Participations gained increased levels of independence and confidence and the pilot did not noticeably impact on the normal running of the college. The driver training pilot helped: to create a positive culture towards driver licencing and driver behaviour, to teach safe and correct driving practices, and to help make students work ready.

While it is acknowledged that many of the effects identified in this research could simply be associated with obtaining a driver licence, many young people, do not obtain a full driver licence, thus limiting opportunities for employment and independence. As such, encouraging and supporting students to obtain their full driver licence in a timely manner through involvement in a school based driver training programme will provide students with an important life skill.

This research recommends that driver training programmes in schools be retained, and expanded, to provide opportunities for all student to secure their full driving licence in a timely manner.

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