

Can our Youth Drive our Children?

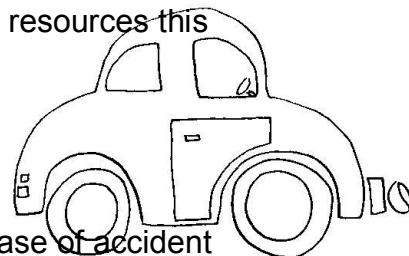
It's a good question and one that I am asked frequently as I travel around the NSW Synod delivering Safe and Welcome Training. My general response tends to be: If you can get away with not driving children/young people anywhere that is best, if you need to drive children/young people then these are the steps that we **suggest** you follow:

There is no legislation that dictates that P Platers cannot drive young people around, so the decision rests with your Church Council. So, your first step is to bring this issue up at a Church Council meeting, the following are some decisions made in Church Councils related to this issue:

- Some Church Councils decide that only drivers with full licenses can drive their children and young people around. If there are enough adult leaders, then this decision is workable, with congregations where the leadership team is predominantly made up of youth this wouldn't work.
- For other Church Councils P Platers are given permission to drive, with the understanding that any driving offence means that they are no longer allowed to have this responsibility. Again, this is a fairly common decision made and one that is workable.
- Other Church Councils decide that there will be no driving of children and young people unless by minibus and that a minimum of 2 leaders must be present at all times. If the Church owns a minibus then this is a workable solution, for rural areas and churches with less resources this is not a viable option.

Guidelines that Church Councils often agree on are:

- The car driven must be roadworthy.
- There should be a mobile phone available in the car in case of accident or running late due to unforeseeable situations. This is so that the passengers can call parents and relieve them of any unnecessary worry.
- All passengers must wear Seatbelts at all times.
- Passengers under 12 must sit in the back seat.
- Always drop your passengers home in a different order. Never drive the same route week after week, and have the same passenger left in the car with you at the end of the trip each week. This can promote a relationship between the driver and passenger that may be misconstrued by the passenger or the passenger's parents.
- Always make sure your passengers enter their house before driving away, either wait in the car or walk your passenger to their front door. This is not just a courtesy this is necessary for making sure that you have safely taken them home.
- Some children and young people will be going to a home to a house with no parents or guardians present at that time. It is still important to see that they go inside once you have dropped them off.



IMPORTANT:

As with all events you are required to have the children/ young people have a parent or guardian sign a permission form/indemnity form. The same applies when children and young people are being driven to or from an event/program run by the Church. On the website you will find a permission form that will have the following included:

There may be occasions when it is necessary to transport children or to walk to nearby facilities.

I DO / DO NOT give permission for my child (as above named) to participate in activities outside of the normal meeting complex.

I DO / DO NOT give permission for my child to be transported in private cars arranged by the leaders of the above named group.

Signature of Parent/Guardian:

_____ **Name:** _____ **Date / /**

Likewise any leaders of programs with children and young people or people asked to drive children and young people are required to sign a form to indicate that they are not a Prohibited Person (Attachment 4). This form can be found on the website at: <http://nsw.uca.org.au/boe/children/safety/htm>

In addition, the Church Council can require that they sign a Driver Declaration Form, these are also found on the website, this is not required by law but does offer some additional peace of mind to the congregation and parents.

I hope that these guidelines help, if you have any additional queries about this issue, please don't hesitate to contact Meg Everard on mege@nsw.uca.org.au