

Open Letter to Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern

Released 26 September 2019

Kei te rangatira, tēnā koe Prime Minister,

New Zealand Driver Licencing System

Studies show that 70,000 – 90,000 young people face major barriers to progressing to a full licence. A driver licence currently holds many functions beyond a licence to drive. It's a prerequisite to many jobs, independence, a formal means of legal identification, and a positive step to participate in our economy.

Families and children will benefit when the drivers in their lives are able to drive legally, safely and confidently. Communities, especially rural and remote communities, will benefit when more of their people are able to access education opportunities, contribute to the care of their whanau, participate in employment and generally take an active part in the life of the community. All of us will benefit when fewer of our young people are caught up in the criminal justice system and more of our young people are able to drive with confidence, access all the opportunities that come with driving, and contribute to our country through their paid and unpaid work, including family care.

Tangata whenua Māori, those in low socio-economic circumstances, those in isolated rural communities, and those currently in the care of the state, face disproportionate barriers to accessing a driver's licence and the benefits that come with it. Today, those who the graduated licensing system fails choose to drive regardless, risk social and economic isolation, face large fines and often a journey into the criminal justice system. These failures prompted us to assemble a diverse and passionate group of New Zealanders spanning business, iwi, community, local government, central government, philanthropic and non-government organisations. Together we formed the *Driving Change Network*.

Our mission is to promote a driver licensing system where licences are recognised for the social and public good they provide. We want New Zealand to be a country where everyone is able to access the benefits of a driver's licence.

While there are a large number of community programmes addressing these challenges, they struggle to meet demand, are not universal nor coordinated across New Zealand, are often restricted to serving a particular demographic, and are underfunded.

The *Driving Change Network* believe that with a more coordinated, inclusive and accessible driver licensing system, we can take another step towards a thriving, just and prosperous Aotearoa. At a recent hui, we identified the common challenges, and worked on some practical solutions to close the current gaps.

Given its significance to all New Zealanders, the *Driving Change Network* would like to meet with you to discuss how we can work together to ensure every New Zealander has the same opportunity to access the benefits of a driver's licence. Given over 7 different Ministries are funding programmes independently, and 11 Ministries are involved in this system, we believe a cross-agency approach is required.

Ngā mihi nui,

The Driving Change Network

Responses to or enquiries regarding this letter can be addressed to Noa Woolloff (noa.woolloff@mtfj.co.nz).



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