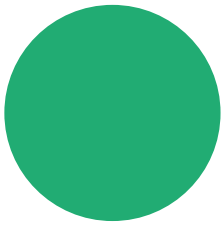




Suggested Operational Changes to Support Community Driver Licensing Initiatives



NOVEMBER 2021



Introduction

The Driving Change Network wants to work alongside government departments to implement systemic changes to the Graduated Driver Licensing System (GDLS). We believe there are simple changes to the current operating model that could achieve more equitable access to driver licensing for everyone in Aotearoa New Zealand.

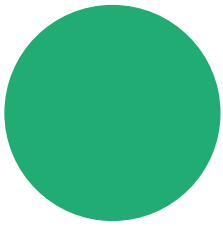
The current GDLS prevents many people, including those in rural New Zealand, from gaining a full licence due to barriers to learning and taking the test.

An estimated 100,000+ New Zealanders struggle to access the licensing system, or are stalling part-way through. This impacts their access to employment, training, community activities and health services for them and their families.

The Driving Change Network represents community driving programme providers and driving instructors who contract to provide driver education and training programmes. Together we work to assist marginalised New Zealanders who, without assistance, would struggle to overcome the social, economic and physical barriers to driver licensing.

Demand for our services throughout New Zealand outstrip funding and resources. The industry, support and funding is fragmented and unorganised, and much of our time is spent navigating the GDLS on behalf of clients and chasing funding to provide ongoing services.

We recognise many changes we are seeking require government approval, however there are some changes that could be made at an operational level that would make a huge difference to everyone.



Practical Testing Services

A large part of providing equitable driver licensing is the ability for everyone to easily access testing services. Sitting a practical Restricted or Full licence test can be stressful ordeal. For many the test is made worse by the distance they have to travel just to get to the nearest testing site.

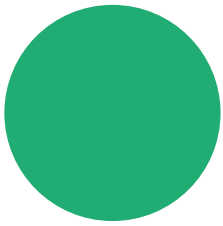
In many areas of New Zealand this includes, for both the learner and their support person, taking time off work to drive to the test, arranging childcare, liaising with community providers for use of a suitable vehicle in which to sit the test, and then the long distance to the testing site, and petrol cost and time to get to the testing site.

Problem

- Hours of Operation. Monday - Friday from 8am to 4pm. These hours don't allow for students or those who work Monday-Friday.
- Distance to testing sites for rural and isolated communities. E.G places such as - Kaikora, Haast, Te Anau, Hicks Bay, Coromandel, Wairoa, Hauraki area students must travel in excess of 200km for a round trip to access testing services.
- Lack of capacity in existing testing sites, causing learner drivers to have to wait long periods before having the opportunity to sit their test.

Solution

- Extend the hours available to include weekends and/or evening test times. This will mean parents & support people don't need to take time off work, students don't miss school, and will increase the number of testing hours available.
- Provide mobile testing solutions through independent contractors staffed by Army TO's and/or trained I endorsed instructors.
This will enable students to sit tests in familiar environments, using hazards in their areas, without the need for a whole day away from work, school and whanau.
- These mobile testing units would also enable support for area's affected by back logs due to lockdowns, without affecting scheduled bookings. The mobile units would also help to relieve capacity issues in existing sites, as rural users could utilise the mobile units freeing up appointment times for those people living closer to existing sites.



Practical Testing Services

Problem

- Monopoly of service with no competition.
- No support from testing contractor or regulatory body regarding complaints about testing officers performance or manner.
- Suggestion that testing sites are based on ability to provide certain conditions (e.g: traffic flow) and test elements (e.g: dual carriage way, traffic lights and roundabouts) and proximity to population.

However, there are a couple of sites in small rural locations in both the South Island and North Island that appears to refute this claim. It seems that rather than a legislative barrier, it is an operational decision.

- No delivery of Driver licensing services that reflect the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi.
- In certain areas there is the requirement to sit the practical test through VTNZ and then visit an AA office to complete the paperwork to gain your licence. This happens throughout the Southern District and the West Coast of the South Island. We are also aware of this happening from time to time in Rotorua when they are busy.

Solution

- Contracting the Mobile testing solution gives consumers another option. This would create competition and encourage improved and a more empathetic service from VTNZ TO's.

- As location requirements for testing sites appear baseless, implementation of mobile testing units that can deliver to small or isolated towns on a regular basis, would assist to reduce the rates of unlicensed drivers in these regions by improving accessibility issues. Test requirements should be able to be fulfilled regardless of location.

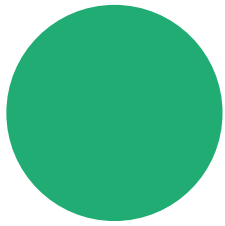
<https://www.nzta.govt.nz/assets/resources/driver-licence-test-guides/restricted-test-guide.pdf>

- We acknowledge that in some regions the level of difficulty able to be tested could mean a person could gain their licence, but not be a safe competent driver so the use of simulators and additional elements could be introduced in conjunction with the standard test. Or perhaps a 'Rural' Licence condition could be enforced just as 'Automatic Vehicle' conditions are.

- We suggest investigation into how this is dealt with in Australia.

<https://nt.gov.au/driving/driverlicence/getting-an-nt-licence/driver-licence-for-remote-residents>

- Contracted Mobile practical services could full-fill a for Māori by Māori service and be able to better cater to Māori and Pacific Island communities.
- Ensure that VTNZ sites and mobile units have staffing and facilities available to ensure that all aspects of the Restricted and Full Licence test can be performed at the one site.
- Ensure that VTNZ or mobile testing unit equipment is regularly calibrated to avoid false fails - ie: with eye tests.



Licence Booking System

Community driving programmes generally offer full support to their clients from instruction to test, and everything in between, in order to assist them to overcome the barriers that have prevented them licensing in the past.

Part of this process involves booking the practical licence test, and more often than not paying for that test. The current system has been developed as a user pays, end-user system and does not recognise the role of the community provider.

Problem

- The current booking system assumes that the person booking and paying is the person sitting the test, and issues the invoice and any notifications to that person.
- Unable to make bulk bookings. This makes it difficult to schedule tests when a number of clients require use of the community programme vehicle as they don't have their own suitable vehicle for the test.
- Clients are able to cancel and access refunds for tests booked and paid for by community programmes.
- Any cancellation notifications go directly to student and does not take into account the availability of driving instructors or vehicles they are using.
- Rescheduled tests are often done at the last moment and notifications go to students.
- Inability of Community Providers to be able to speak to Waka Kotahi staff about their clients on their behalf regarding problems or queries, creates difficulties particularly when the client has language barriers or learning difficulties and needs this support.

Solution

- Develop the site to model the DRIVE website with two different options at the home page.

I want to **sit my licence**

I want to **support someone to sit their licence**

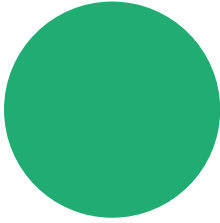
The second option would be designed to support approved community licence providers, enabling them to act on their clients behalf.

It would enable approved providers to be able to make bookings, receive the GST invoices, make changes and receive refunds where they have booked and paid for a registered client.

It would enable them to get support for the client, perhaps with a signed consent form could be uploaded to the site against the licence booking.

Notifications of changes to the bookings would go to the provider enabling them to reschedule instructors & vehicles and ensure the client gets to the test.

In case of COVID lockdowns, it would flag all of the providers clients for the period and ensure that the providers clients are rescheduled through that provider, removing the need for them to go back and reschedule all the individual client's bookings.



WHO WE ARE

The Driving Change Network was formed in 2019, when **Todd Foundation, JR McKenzie Trust, Vodafone New Zealand Foundation** and the **Mayors Taskforce for Jobs** decided to address the systemic changes required to create an equitable and accessible driver licensing system.

We are a diverse group of more than 250 Stakeholders representing the community, industry, Iwi/Māori and philanthropy sectors who want to work with Government to establish a Graduated Driver License System (GDLS) which includes a focus on driver education, training and licensing.



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