



Minister for Transport; Planning

Our ref: 72-20124
Your ref: A762821

Mr Peter Katsambanis MLA
Chair
Community Development and Justice Standing Committee
lacdjsc@parliament.wa.gov.au

Dear Mr Katsambanis

DRIVER TRAINING AND LICENSING TESTING

Thank you for your correspondence dated 27 June 2019 regarding driver training and licensing testing.

In the financial year 2018-19, the Department of Transport (DoT) has conducted more than 122,000 Practical Driving Assessments (PDA) and of those 99,563 were in relation to C class driver's licences.

While the trend has seen a reduction in the average pass rate for C class licences over the past 10 years (8.86 per cent reduction in metropolitan and 10.35 per cent reduction regionally), improved application of the Driver Competency Standard (DVS) has also shown an 80 per cent reduction in the number of young people killed or seriously injured from road accidents in the probationary driver cohort (from 251 in 2009-10 to 52 in 2016-17). A probationary driver is defined as a person who has held their licence for less than two years.

Irrespective of changes to the test criteria in 2007 (when the PDA test format was reduced from seven to five sections), a high fail rate has continued with over 55,000 people failing their test in 2018. While the DCS is being applied consistently in all PDAs, the pass rates do vary between metropolitan locations and also between metropolitan and regional sites and the reasons for this are many which requires greater analysis and further investigation.

Since 2017, DoT has implemented changes to the Graduated Driver Training and Licensing Scheme (GDT&L), including a re-sequencing of the scheme components. Prior to this candidates had to complete at least 25 hours (and six months driving experience) before attempting the PDA. Candidates then had to undergo a further six months of practice driving under supervision until they were 17, before completing the Hazard Perception Test (HPT) and being issued their probationary licence.

Candidates now complete at least 50 hours of supervised driving with at least five of those at night before being eligible to complete the HPT and attempting the PDA at age 17 or older. The PDA is now the final assessment in determining whether a candidate is a competent driver and meets the DCS.

Since the re-sequencing, pass rates across all sites have reduced slightly as the focus has moved to ensuring that only candidates who meet the DCS are successful in obtaining a licence. This also correlates to increased training rigour and auditing requirements of DoT Driver Assessors to ensure they are assessing candidates to the DCS and may be reflected in recent Road Safety Commission crash data in the reduction in young people who make up the State's road toll.

The variation in pass rates between sites may be attributable to the demographic diversity of candidates presenting for a PDA at each location, with overseas applicants for a WA driver's licence reporting high failure rates. DoT's Driver Assessors are regularly audited to ensure they are consistently applying the DCS.

The new iAssess technology now records the PDA, including the all audio interactions between candidates and driving assessors. This is improving the information available to DoT on reasons why candidates are not meeting the driving standard. The PDA test format is designed to identify unsafe driving skills or behaviours within the five sections on specific test criterion. This shows where the candidate may not be consistent with applying the DCS during assessment. This, along with the ability to listen to the iAssess recording is used by the Driver Assessor to provide helpful feedback to the candidate on where they need to improve.

This information is helping influence DoT engagement and education activities. DoT is working with School Drug Education and Road Aware (SDERA) and other stakeholders in improving education on the requirements to meet the DCS. DoT has implemented driver instructor forums at each DoT Service Centre twice a year to discuss reasons why candidates do not meet the standard and to work with the instructor group in improving candidate outcomes.

In Mirrabooka, where the pass rate is lowest, DoT is exploring opportunities to work with the local migrant community on educating new arrivals on WA road rules and driving standards. DoT recently partnered with the Clontarf Aboriginal College at their open day to assist young aboriginal candidates to meet identification requirements, understand the requirements of the GDT&L, and to obtain their learner's permit.

Additionally, DoT has improved the releasing pattern of PDA appointments to ensure that all candidates have the ability to book a PDA in a timely manner. For candidates who require priority assistance for a PDA in order to obtain employment, DoT will on provision of evidence, provide a priority service to assist these customers.

Another measure to help improve novice driver pass rates includes DoT sending text or email messages to remind candidates of their PDA appointment, to present with an appropriate licensed and roadworthy vehicle and gives them the opportunity to reschedule their PDA in advance if they feel they are not fully prepared.

DoT is currently implementing changes to its website in order to improve access to information on how to obtain a driver's licence for all candidates and will, on the advice of the Committee, seek to provide access to other supporting programs for candidates.

The latest figures have shown there has been a slight increase in metropolitan average pass rates since the 2019 financial year compared with previous years, which is up from 38.32 per cent to 42.33 per cent (with regional up from 57.26 to 57.75) and DoT will continue to monitor this trend.

DoT welcomes the findings of the Committee and is already working on the recommendations that the Committee has outlined in its report.

Thank you for raising this matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a vertical line followed by a large, stylized loop.

**HON RITA SAFFIOTI MLA
MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT**

16 AUG 2019