

Submission on

Land Transport Driver Licensing Amendment Bill

21 October 2010

Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on the Land Transport Driver Licensing Amendment Bill. TRAFINZ **supports** the Bill, though would like to see it go further.

About TRAFINZ

TRAFINZ (The Traffic Institute of New Zealand Inc) represents a wide grouping of NZ local authorities, covering the majority of the New Zealand population. Its membership includes regional councils, the major metropolitan cities and smaller provincial authorities as well as private sector and non local government members.

TRAFINZ' Executive is comprised of elected councillors and officers, drawn from a cross section of the membership, together with senior personnel representing its key government partners and supported by a number of senior technical staff from transport consultancies that volunteer their services *pro bono*. This year TRAFINZ ran its 62nd Annual conference.

The Institute's primary focus is on sustainable transportation planning, traffic management and road safety. It provides specialist advice to member authorities on traffic and safety issues by drawing from the depth of expertise available through its members. It also acts as a conduit for local authorities to respond to the NZ Government on new transport policies and legislation.

Submission

TRAFINZ welcomes the Bill as a step in the right direction to lifting driving safety. TRAFINZ has long argued that the New Zealand driver licensing age is too low and the length of time to obtain a full license is too short.

TRAFINZ has extensive contacts with most of the world's leading international road safety experts. Without exception they consider 15 far too low an age for driving. Words used to describe using 15 as our minimum age usually are some variant of 'crazy' or 'insane'! This Bill is a common sense initiative.

Most leading road safety countries have adopted 17 or 18 as minimum ages. We view 16 as a start in the right direction. The general opinion, backed by research, is that 15 year olds simply are too often

not mature enough in terms of development to safely handle not merely a vehicle, but themselves and the complex interactions with other road users and the road environment.

The main argument against raising the age seems to be the impact on rural communities. However given the school leaving age is now 16, having been raised from 15, it is difficult to understand why the last year of school requires a motor vehicle when previous years do not. There were reports (2007) that the then Government was considering a further amendment to school leaving ages to 17, so the trend appears to be upwards.

The other argument against increasing the age is that it means we have inexperienced 16 year olds rather than inexperienced 15 year olds. However the evidence is that each year of development means having more mature, and more developed drivers, and reducing the period which is high risk by virtue of age, not merely experience.

We would be happy to provide further information regarding age and experience related risk from international research, though we have no doubt that your officials will do that for you.

In terms of the length of the Learner Licensing Period, TRAFINZ also strongly supports the Bill. It is clear that a longer learning period will assist road safety by having a longer duration of supervised driving before driving solo. The combination of the two elements of the Bill would make 17 the minimum age for solo driving.

TRAFINZ further supports other licensing initiatives which the Government has indicated it will introduce, notably the requirement to record a minimum number of hours of supervised driving.

All these initiatives will go some way to having safer drivers on our road. We would take the opportunity to suggest that some retraining requirement be required. Currently once a driver has a licence that is for life. We retest motor vehicles every 6 or 12 months depending on age, but there is no ability other than where an offence has been committed to retest drivers, despite driver error being a factor in excess of 90% of crashes. We take the opportunity to suggest that considering some change in testing regimes might be appropriate.

Thank you again for the opportunity to make a submission. We congratulate Hon Peter Dunne for developing the Bill in the first instance, and for the Government taking it up. We hope that it receives all party support and will represent a useful step in improving road safety and showing that we want to stay safer on our roads.

We would welcome the opportunity to speak to our submission and to provide further information if required.

Cr Andy Foster
President
TRAFINZ – The New Zealand Traffic Institute