

MINO-757 Conversion of an overseas licence

25 May 2023

Provide an update on the process to convert an overseas licence and any exemption applications required.

Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency's response:

Course provider certificates for heavy classes of licence

- Approved courses for heavy vehicle licence classes are designed to enable applicants to move through New Zealand's Graduated Driver Licensing System without needing to wait the required time stand down period between each stage of licence.
- As it stands, all licence holders of a Class 2 learner (2L) to 5 learner (5L) licence are required to hold the licence for a period of six months before they are eligible to apply for the full class of heavy licence and complete the appropriate practical test.
- However, if the applicants holding a Class 2L to 5L licence choose to complete an approved driving course, there will be no wait time between the stages of licence. For example, once an applicant receives a Class 2L, they are able to undertake an approved driving course straight away. On completion of the approved driving course and production of the course certificate at a driver licence agent, they will be able to apply for the Class 2 full (2F) licence without waiting the required six-month stand down period.
- As the approved course also includes a practical assessment, applicants are not required to sit a practical test with a driver testing officer as part of their 2F application.

Legislated requirements for the conversion of an overseas licence

- Clause 89 of the Land Transport (Driver Licensing) Rule 1999 (the Rule) sets out the legislated process that a person must complete in order to convert an overseas licence to the equivalent class of New Zealand licence.
- When converting to an equivalent Class 1 (car) or Class 6 (motorcycle) licence, applicants may be required to pass a theory and/or practical test depending on the country that issued the overseas licence and how long the licence has been held.
- However, when converting to an equivalent class of heavy vehicle licence (New Zealand classes 2 to 5), all applicants are required to pass a theory test, regardless of which country the overseas licence was issued.
- For practical tests associated with the conversion of heavy classes of licence, clause 89A(4) of the Rule stipulates that a practical test is not required if the applicant has held the overseas licence for more than two years AND the licence was issued in one of the exempt countries listed in Schedule 8 of the Rule.
- For all other countries not listed in Schedule 8, a practical test is required to convert to a heavy class of New Zealand licence.
- There is no clause that allows an applicant to complete an approved driving course in lieu of completing the practical test. Therefore, applicants are required to apply for an exemption from the Rule for Waka Kotahi to accept the course certificate.

Obtaining a vehicle recovery (V) endorsement

- In order to obtain a V endorsement, all applicants must have held a full class of New Zealand licence for at least two years as outlined in clause 34(1)(b) of the Rule.
- The two-year time period is in order to reduce the risk to road safety by ensuring that the holder has the required skill and driving experience to hold a commercial endorsement. The two-year time period is also part of the prerequisites for applicants wishing to obtain a passenger (P), instructor (I) and testing officer (O) endorsement.
- The time a person has held the full class of licence is taken from the issue date of a New Zealand licence.
- For people who have converted an overseas licence, the issue date that appears on their New Zealand driver licence is the date that the application to convert their licence was granted (not the date that they first obtained that licence overseas).
- If an applicant has held the equivalent class of licence overseas, they are able to apply for an exemption from the Rule in order for Waka Kotahi to recognise the time they have held the overseas licence and count that towards the mandatory two-year period.

Correspondence received from the National Road Carriers (NRC) Association

- The situation outlined by Ace Heavy Haulage is accurate in that the licence holders are required to complete exemption applications in order for Waka Kotahi to recognise:
 1. the approved course certificate in lieu of completing a 5F practical test as part of their overseas conversion application.
 2. the time held on their overseas licence in order to obtain a V endorsement without needing to hold a full class of New Zealand driver licence for two years.
- Where this situation arises, and Waka Kotahi is aware that two or more exemption applications are required, it can process the exemptions within one application.
- With respect to Ace Heavy Haulage employees, as the necessary information has been provided within the correspondence received, Waka Kotahi has been able to merge and grant both exemptions. The applicants have been advised of the outcome.