

MINISTERIAL BRIEFING NOTE

Subject	Driver Licensing Improvement Programme Overview
Date	28 July 2023
Briefing number	BRI-2834

Contact(s) for telephone discussion (if required)				
Name	Position	Direct line	Cell phone	1 st contact
Neil Cook	Director of Land Transport	s 9(2)(a)	s 9(2)(a)	✓

Action taken by Office of the Minister

- ☐ Noted
- ☐ Seen by Minister
- ☐ Agreed
- ☐ Feedback provided
- ☐ Forwarded to
- ☐ Needs change [please specify]
- ☐ Withdrawn
- ☐ Overtaken by events

28 July 2023

Hon Damien O'Connor – Associate Minister of Transport

Driver Licensing Improvement Programme Overview

Purpose

1. This briefing provides you with an overview of the Driver Licensing Improvement Programme (DLIP) as part of your introduction to the driver licensing portfolio. DLIP is a cross-agency programme developed to improve access to the driver licensing system.

Background

2. In November 2021, the (then) Director of Land Transport attended an Employment, Education and Training (EET) Ministers meeting to discuss the issues they were seeing in the current drivers licensing system. This initiated a short due diligence process to understand the work that was required to address these issues which resulted in the DLIP being initiated.
3. In March 2022, Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency presented back to Ministers Wood and Jackson, to confirm some immediate actions had been taken to address issues with Vehicle Testing New Zealand (VTNZ) capacity, proposing regional trials to commence in Te Tai Tokerau and Tairāwhiti, and also that Waka Kotahi commence working on a business case to address systemic issues and develop proposals for long-term sustainable change.
4. It was agreed by Ministers Wood and Jackson that this work should continue under the mana of the EET Group. Exploratory work undertaken by Waka Kotahi indicated that one of the reasons that impactful change had not been able to occur in the decade prior was, in part, due to challenges of objectives and outcomes of change not aligning cross-agency. This proposal was subsequently endorsed by the EET Ministers Group in June 2022. The current governance arrangement under the EET Ministers and Minister of Transport has worked well to progress the programme.
5. Waka Kotahi is the lead agency for the DLIP, working closely with Te Manatū Waka, the Ministry of Social Development, Accident Compensation Corporation, Te Puni Kōkiri and New Zealand Police.
6. The DLIP is focused on Class 1 (Car) licences as this was viewed as the priority at the time by the Minister and the EET Ministers due to the indication to this being the greatest barrier to employment and other opportunities. Class 2-5 (Heavy Vehicles) and Class 6 (Motorcycles) licences are excluded from scope.
7. The DLIP also has support from the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, and the Driving Change Network, as well as the Office of Rural Communities.

Investment to Date and Potential Future Investment

8. Partnerships with Far North REAP (Rural Education Activities Programme) and Tairāwhiti REAP were established in mid-2022 to trial new ways of making access to driver testing for restricted and full licences faster and easier, these are in part funded from Budget 22 (where in line with the agreed appropriation) and the remainder from the Agency Budget.
9. In Budget 2022, the Government committed to spending \$86.5 million over four years to help improve access to driver licensing for people with the most barriers to success. The Waka Kotahi funding from Budget 2022 bid (\$16.95 million over four years, with \$4.05m per annum in the out years) is focused on increasing both practical and theory testing services across the country and establishing new roles to support communities delivering driver licensing products and services.
10. The development of a Programme Business Case (PBC) to consider future investment has been funded through the Agency Budget. The PBC has been developed considering lessons learnt from the trials, feedback across multiple stakeholder groups, and with strong cross-agency involvement.

s 9(2)(f)(iv)

Actions and Progress to Date

Stakeholder Engagement

15. In August 2022, key stakeholders from across New Zealand gathered to gain a better understanding of the current issues. Due to the complexity of the Graduated Driver Licensing System (GDLS) operating environment, a wide range of participants were involved in three separate Investment Logic Mapping (ILM) workshops for the following areas:
 - **Socio-economic** – focused on the socio-economic harms that are experienced in the driver licensing system and developing options.

- **Justice** – focused on the justice system, and the issues that are created when someone enters the system with no licence, and the opportunities for system change.
- **Licensing** – focused on issues around licence testing, the GDLS and becoming a driver testing officer.

16. The stakeholders identified and agreed with the following key problem statements:

- Failure to meet the diverse needs of our communities reduces participation, resulting in poor safety, economic, and social outcomes.
- A lack of consistent and accessible services, coupled with insufficient capacity to test, inhibits entry and re-entry into the driver licensing system.
- Not valuing having a driver licence, alongside a focus on testing and compliance, and a lack of driver safety education, is putting drivers and other road users at risk of death or serious injury.
- Deprived communities have a higher proportion of unlicensed drivers, contributing to social isolation and poor living standards, particularly in rural and remote communities.

s 9(2)(f)(iv)



s 9(2)(f)(iv)



s 9(2)(f)(iv)



s 9(2)(f)(iv)

Funding from Budget 2022

26. In Budget 2022, the Government committed to spending \$86.5 million over four years to help improve access to driver licensing for people with the most barriers to success. The Waka Kotahi funding from Budget 2022 bid is focused on increasing both practical and theory testing services across the country and establishing new roles to support communities delivering driver licensing products and services.
27. Waka Kotahi is working closely with the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) on delivering outcomes agreed in Budget 2022, including regional planning. Data on current licence rates from MSD and the 2018 Census is being used to inform the approach to regional and national capacity planning, including projections for anticipated demand for testing and whether that will require additional test routes, greater driver testing officer capacity, new community driver testing officers, or more mobile theory testing.
28. The Waka Kotahi DLIP team is also working alongside delivery agents, Vehicle Testing New Zealand and the Automobile Association. Waka Kotahi has stood up six of the seven new regional roles funded through Budget 2022 to support community driver training and mentoring programmes across New Zealand.
29. Regional advisor roles have also been established to strengthen and develop community driver training and mentoring programmes, enabling regions and communities to offer greater access and support for driver licensing products and services.

Improved Regional Support

30. As well as the new regional advisor roles described above, three safety driver education advisor roles are being introduced this year, 2023. These advisors will work alongside community providers to develop driver education and training content.
31. The programme partnered with Far North REAP (Rural Education Activities Programme) and Tairāwhiti REAP in mid-2022 to trial new ways of making access to driver testing for restricted and full licences faster and easier.
 - In Te Tai Tokerau/Northland, Far North REAP is working with local police officers qualified as driver testing officers to offer practical driver testing for REAP students. REAP and the police officers have worked closely together to understand local needs.
 - The Tairāwhiti REAP team has been supporting students to sit driver licence tests, including picking up groups in rural communities like Hicks Bay for the long drive to the practical driving test in Gisborne.

32. Learnings from these community trials are being fed into the programme as we develop the future state of the driver licensing system.
33. The personal impact of these community initiatives on the lives of people in both Tairāwhiti and Te Tai Tokerau is evident in these videos:
- Te Tairāwhiti driver licensing trial - https://youtu.be/9W_iNNAZkuw
 - Te Tai Tokerau driver licensing trial - <https://youtu.be/rPgkhq7-0Qc>
34. In addition, the public can stay informed of our progress by viewing the DLIP newsletters which are published online regularly at: www.nzta.govt.nz/driver-licences/improving-the-driver-licensing-system/. The latest newsletter can be read online at: nzta-regulatoryservices.cmail20.com/t/t-e-zduqiy-jtjimhhl-r/

More Driver Testing Routes

35. Sitting practical driving tests has been made easier with additional testing routes being added across the country, particularly in smaller and more remote centres.
- Matamata, Upper Hutt, Kaikohe, Dargaville, Wairoa and Waipukurau test routes went live in the second half of 2022.
 - Due to damaged roads in the wider Tairāwhiti region, a new test route in Opōtiki was established in April 2022, initially for students of Tairāwhiti Rural Education Activities Programme (REAP). It is expected to open for public testing by Vehicle Testing New Zealand later in 2023.

Next Steps

36. s 9(2)(f)(iv)
37. Seek endorsement on the preferred future state option, being s 9(2)(f)(iv) and
38. Seek support for the Minister of Transport to be invited by EET Ministers to report back to Cabinet in late 2023/early 2024 with a Detailed Business Case.
39. s 9(2)(f)(iv)
40. s 9(2)(f)(iv)
41. A Māori Reference Group will be established to provide advice to the DLIP team as the planned initiatives are scoped and designed. The DLIP team is working across agencies to identify opportunities to leverage existing Māori reference groups.

It is recommended that you:

1. **Note** the contents of this briefing



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Neil Cook

Director of Land Transport

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Hon Damien O'Connor, Associate Minister of Transport

Date:

2023

Proactively Released