

**Submission to the Transport and Industrial Relations Select Committee on the  
Land Transport (Driver Licensing) Amendment Bill No.4**

NCWNZ is an umbrella organisation representing 47 Nationally Organised Societies and National Members. It has 28 Branches throughout the country attended by representatives of those societies and some 150 other societies. It also has three satellite groups and three regional consultation groups. NCWNZ is representative of approximately 350,000 women, via its affiliated bodies. The Council's functions are to serve women, the family and the community at local, national and international levels through research, study, discussion and action. NCWNZ welcomes the opportunity to consider this Bill. The response has been prepared by the Public Issues Standing Committee following circulation of the questions to NCWNZ members, and in consultation with the NCWNZ Board and Parliamentary Watch Committee. It relies heavily on policy decisions which have been formulated through National Conferences.

**General Statement**

The purpose of this Bill is to raise the minimum driver licensing age from 15 years to 16 years, and to extend the length of the learner licensing period from 6 months to 12 months.

According to the Automobile Association the existing graduated driver licensing system is not adequately preparing our young drivers for the time when they start to drive solo on the roads. Mike Noon, AA General Manager for Motoring Affairs has stated that –'The first six months of driving solo is when young drivers are at greatest risk of killing or seriously injuring themselves and others. To reduce their risk we need to ensure our young drivers are better prepared when they receive their restricted licence and start driving without supervision.'

**NCWNZ supports this Bill for the following reasons:**

**Clause 5.**

With regard to the raising of the minimum age for driver licensing to 16 years we believe that:

- New Zealand is one of only a few countries in the world that allows driver licensing at 15 years,
- if the age is changed to 16 years it will be in line with the school leaving age,
- recent published research has shown that full brain maturity has not developed at this age and the 15-year-old's brain is not mature enough to envisage the sorts of decisions involved in responsible driving practice,
- it will delay the beginning of solo driving,
- with the driving age at 15 many young people are driving to school when there are other forms of transport available, such as public transport, walking or cycling. Changing the age to 16 would reduce the number of cars on the road.

**Clause 4.**

With regard to extending the learner licensing period from 6 months to 12 months we feel that:

- this will extend the supervised driving experience,
- it will encourage new drivers to get more on-road experience before they drive solo,

- it should reduce the number of road accidents, which is disproportionately high in this younger age group. It is the leading cause of death in 15 -24 year olds.

NCWNZ also supports other recommendations made by the Automobile Association:-

- That there should be 120 hours of supervised driving before driving without supervision. Under the proposed legislation it would be possible for learner drivers to wait out the extended period but not continue their driver education or experience. We would suggest the supervisors to be asked to confirm that 120 hours had been completed.
- That all new drivers be required to complete a compulsory attitudinal training course as part of their restricted licence. The intention is to increase road responsibility and NCWNZ would be in favour of using defensive driving courses for this purpose.
- That the restricted licence test be made tougher, including risk management such as eye scanning and hazard detection.
- That parents and guardians could play a bigger role in helping prepare children to drive.

The intent of the above recommendations are reflected by the fact that NCWNZ, in recognition that a driver's licence is a privilege not to be taken lightly, has policy from 1960 onwards supporting such extensive driver education programmes. Indeed in 1994 NCWNZ requested the Minister of Transport 'to introduce compulsory free defensive driving courses after the two year restricted licence period and before the full licence is obtained'. (15.2.5)

NCWNZ also supports the reduction of the blood alcohol level for young drivers and goes further with its 1999 policy which recommended that 'legislation be introduced to make it illegal for alcohol to be carried in or on a motor vehicle in such a manner that it can be consumed by the occupants of the vehicle.' (15.1.14)

NCWNZ is pleased that the Government is introducing this legislation with the intention of making the roads safer for all and encouraging more responsible driving.



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