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Office of the
Director-General

Department of
Transport and Main Roads

Senator Glenn Sterle
Chair
Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and
Transport References Committee
PO Box 6100
Senate
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Senator

I refer to the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee's public hearing of 10 November 2016, where Mr Andrew Mahon, Executive Director (Transport Access and Use) and I provided evidence on behalf of the Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) in regards to heavy vehicle licensing. In addition to the evidence presented at the hearing, this additional information may be of assistance in clarifying Queensland's licensing arrangements.

Driver licensing system

Queensland has a graduated licensing system, whereby persons must hold their licences for a minimum set period prior to obtaining the next class of licence. Class C (car) licence holders must hold their licence for 12 months before they can apply for class LR (light rigid) or class MR (medium rigid) licences. To be eligible to apply for a class HR (heavy rigid) licence, a person must hold a class C licence for a minimum 24 months or a class LR or MR for 12 months. For eligibility to apply for a class HC (heavy combination) licence, a person must hold a class MR or HR for 12 months. When individuals have held class HR or HC licences for 12 months, they are eligible to apply for class MC (multi-combination) licences. Queensland will recognise the time an equivalent foreign licence is held when calculating eligibility to upgrade a licence class.

Foreign licence holders

Under the Australian National Driver Licensing Scheme, adopted by all states and territories, holders of any valid foreign driver licences are authorised to drive in Australia while they are visiting. Visitors must only drive the vehicles authorised on their foreign licence and comply with any conditions of the licence.

If individuals are Australian citizens or obtain a permanent or special category visa they must abide by three-month residency rule. This means that they may only drive in Queensland on their current foreign licence for a maximum of three months. If they wish to continue to drive in Queensland after three months, they must obtain a Queensland licence. A permanent or special category visa allows a person to stay indefinitely in Australia. This differs to temporary, student, business or guardian visas that allow the holders to stay in Australia for a limited time, or until a certain event happens or while they have a special status. The three-month residency rule does not apply to temporary visa holders.

In addition to a foreign licence holders' authority being withdrawn under the three-month residency rule, a foreign licence holders' authority to drive in Queensland will be also withdrawn if they:

- are disqualified by an Australian Court
- are suspended in Queensland due to non-payment of fines
- accumulate an excessive amount of demerit points
- are convicted of a high speed offence
- become medically unfit to drive
- fail a practical driving test
- hold a foreign licence that expires or is cancelled.

The Association of Australian and New Zealand Road Transport and Traffic Authorities (Austroads) recognises licences issued by certain countries with similar driver licensing regimes to those in Australia. These countries are known as recognised countries and experienced driver recognition countries.

The requirements for getting a Queensland car or motorcycle licence can vary according to where the foreign licence was issued and the age of the applicant. If people hold a driver licence from a recognised country, they are not required to pass a written road rules or practical driving test for a Queensland car or motorcycle licence providing they have held the licence within the previous five years. The following countries are recognised countries: Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Guernsey, Ireland, Isle of Man, Italy, Japan, Jersey, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom and United States of America.

If persons 25 years of age or older hold a licence from an experienced driver recognition country, they are not required to pass a written road rules or practical driving test for a Queensland car or motorcycle licence, providing they have held the licence within the previous five years. The following countries are experienced driver recognition countries: Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hong Kong, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, South Korea, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa and Taiwan.

If persons hold a driver licence from a country not listed above or they are under 25 years of age with a driver licence issued by an experienced driver recognition country, they must pass both a written road rules test and a practical driving test before being issued with a Queensland driver licence.

New Zealand driver licence holders may have licence classes LR to MC transferred to Queensland without any practical driving test requirements, however, they are required to do both a general and heavy vehicle written road rules test. If they wish to transfer a class MC they must provide additional evidence that confirms they have experience driving class MC vehicles.

Other foreign heavy vehicle licence holders may apply for a Queensland licence that is equivalent to the class shown on their foreign licence. For example, holders of a heavy vehicle licence that corresponds to a class HR licence may apply for a class HR licence. Applicants must pass a written road rules test for both general and heavy vehicles, and either pass a Q-SAFE practical driving test in a vehicle that is representative of that licence class, or complete an approved training course delivered by a New South Wales (NSW) or Victoria approved registered training organisation (RTO).

Testing requirements

In Queensland, all persons applying for a class LR, MR, HR, HC or MC licence must pass a heavy vehicle road rules test. A class LR, MR, HR or HC licence applicant must also pass a Q-SAFE practical driving test conducted by TMR driving examiners or the Queensland Police Service (on behalf of TMR) in rural and remote areas of Queensland. Alternatively, the applicant may complete an approved training course delivered by a NSW or Victoria approved RTO.

For a Queensland class MC licence, persons must complete a TLIC4006 – Drive Multi-Combination Vehicle approved training course delivered by a Queensland approved RTO. Multi-combination driver training courses delivered by NSW or Victoria approved RTOs are also recognised in Queensland. The TLIC4006 – Drive Multi-Combination Vehicle training course involves the participant demonstrating the skills and knowledge required to drive a class MC vehicle safely, including systematic and efficient control of all vehicle functions, coupling and uncoupling of dollies, monitoring of traffic and road conditions, management of vehicle condition and performance, and effective management of hazardous situations.

Some 35 Queensland-based RTOs conduct approximately 3100 class MC competency based training and assessments annually. As class MC vehicles include road train and B-double vehicles, the decision to outsource class MC tests was based on TMR's inability to provide the necessary facilities at locations suitable to test this class of licence. This is because road trains and B-double vehicles are generally restricted to approved road train and B-double routes. Most TMR Customer Service Centres are not located on approved routes.

National Heavy Vehicle Driver Competency Framework (NHVDCF)

In March 2011, all jurisdictions endorsed the NHVDCF, establishing nationally consistent minimum competency standards for RTOs undertaking heavy vehicle licence assessments on behalf of licensing authorities. Currently, only NSW and Victoria have implemented the NHVDCF.

Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA)

ASQA is the national regulator responsible for regulating courses and training providers, and assessing that RTOs comply with registration requirements to ensure quality standards are met.

Registered training organisations (RTO)

TMR recognises RTOs registered with ASQA that deliver training and assessments for dangerous goods vehicle drivers, pilot vehicle drivers, escort vehicle drivers, driver trainers, rider trainers and class MC vehicle drivers.

While ASQA ensures that RTOs comply with their registration requirements, TMR's role is to ensure that Queensland-based RTOs training and assessment tools contain the appropriate technical content and meet licensing and industry standards. For this reason, TMR will only accept a qualification or statements of attainment from RTOs which are currently registered with ASQA and have the specific qualification or unit on their scope of registration.

Medical condition reporting

Queensland has legislation in place that requires all Queensland licence holders, who have a medical condition that may affect their ability to drive safely, or who are 75 years of age or older, to hold and drive in accordance with a current medical certificate. These drivers need to carry their medical certificate with them at all times while driving a motor vehicle.

Queensland licence holders have a legal responsibility to notify TMR if they have a long-term or permanent medical condition that is likely to adversely affect their ability to drive safely or if they have an increase in, or other aggravation to, an existing long-term or permanent medical condition they have previously notified about. Notification of medical condition development or change must occur as soon as licence holders become aware. They must not wait until they renew their licence. Licence holders who fail to notify TMR of an adverse medical condition may incur a fine of up to \$7314 and may also have their licence cancelled.

Health standards relating to drivers are contained in the national publication, *Assessing Fitness to Drive*. This publication is available to all health professionals and is publicly available at www.austroads.com.au. *Assessing Fitness to Drive* outlines two sets of medical standards for a driver licence: private standards and commercial standards. The commercial standards apply to licence holders who hold heavy vehicle licence classes MR, HR, HC or MC, and/or who drive public passenger vehicles, or transport dangerous goods. The commercial standards are more stringent than the private standards and generally require the opinion of a medical specialist. All other licence holders may be assessed under the private standards.

I trust this information is of assistance and hope this clarifies evidence already provided.

Yours sincerely

Mike Stapleton
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