

April 8, 2024

Dear Honourable Minister of Transport and Members of Parliament,

We write to you today to request you urgently address a matter of great concern affecting both the public and the driver education and training sector that are being impacted by **the excruciatingly long wait times to access driver licensing tests.**

This issue has far-reaching consequences. It impacts an individual's ability to legally drive in New Zealand, to access employment and training opportunities, the efficiency of driving programmes, and the overall safety of our roads. It significantly impacts the economic development of all New Zealand, particularly in cyclone-affected regions, where there is an urgent need for fully licensed drivers to support operations, as well as in rural communities lacking access to public transportation.

People having to wait months to access a practical test has led to a cascade of problems.

- Driving programmes are unable to exit current 'test-ready' clients which prevents new learners accessing support and forcing them to navigate their learning journey alone, risking the development of unsafe driving habits and posing risks to road safety.
- The inability of students to take their tests hinders driving programme providers from meeting key performance indicators (KPIs) and accessing funding payments. Constantly checking for test cancellations disrupts lesson planning, leading to last-minute rescheduling and inconvenience for both instructors and students. This financial strain has led some providers having to make the tough decision to close this year.
- Individuals who are not adequately prepared for the test are simply 'taking their chances', which puts VTNZ testing officers at risk and wastes the tester's time.
- The inability to obtain a driver's licence severely restricts employment opportunities and independent travel, particularly in areas lacking public transport. This often leads individuals to drive illegally, risking fines, judicial proceedings and endangering themselves and others on the road.

There is widespread frustration within the community regarding the current situation. Since the implementation of the 'free resit policy', there are now testing officers often sitting idle during scheduled test times because individuals are failing to attend their booked practical test slots. This is a **significant waste of taxpayer funds.**

We recognise that a driver's licence is not a right but a privilege that must be earned and respected. The removal of resit fees with no restrictions, has inadvertently diminished the significance of this process, further exacerbating the existing backlog and impeding road safety efforts.

We strongly recommend that, in addition to addressing the fallout from the removal of resit fees, NZTA (NZ Transport Agency) considers expanding the number of locations supporting the

highly effective Community Testing Officer Trials. Our surveys have demonstrated that prior to the holiday season, when many testing sites were inundated with lengthy delays, areas serviced by Community Driver Testing Officers (CDTOs) experienced significantly less disruption. This not only highlights the positive impact of CDTOs on marginalized communities but also alleviates pressure on VTNZ sites accessible to the public.

Therefore, we urge you to promptly address this situation. We implore you to expedite the necessary legislative changes to curb the current misuse of licence payment and testing services, while simultaneously accelerating the training and deployment of additional community testing officers and test routes across New Zealand. Immediate action is essential to mitigate the adverse effects of the current backlog and ensure equitable access to essential licensing services.

The safety of our roads and the opportunities available to New Zealanders are at stake. We urge you to prioritise this matter and work towards swift and effective solutions that benefit all members of society.

On behalf of all the individual members of the Driving Change Network.

Yours sincerely

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