The Department of Transport (DoT) is committed to achieving substantive equality by providing services to a diverse community in a fair and non-discriminatory manner. DoT responds to the different needs of all individuals in the community through a process of continuous improvement in the provision of services.

In 2008, DoT (formerly the Department for Planning and Infrastructure) made a commitment to implement the Substantive Equality Framework and identified the Graduated Driver Training and Licensing (GDT&L) system as an area that had potential barriers to Aboriginal people and people from ethnic minority groups.

The GDT&L system was selected to undergo a Needs and Impact Assessment as it is a high priority service which affects all Western Australian residents seeking to obtain a Western Australian driver’s licence. A driver’s licence is often considered necessary to access essential services, and may even affect a person’s ability to obtain employment, attend cultural and religious events and/or settle in a new country.

The initial screening determined that there were significant barriers for both Aboriginal people and people from ethnic minority groups. In many instances, the barriers identified were very different and it was determined that two separate projects would be undertaken to further investigate the barriers and develop recommendations to address them.

I am very pleased with the work done to date and have attached summaries of both projects.

DoT is committed to providing all Western Australians with improved access to services that best meet their needs.

Reece Waldock
Director General - Transport
24 September 2012
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**Policy, Driver and Vehicle Services, Department of Transport. May 2012**

**Achieving substantive equality in remote areas of Western Australia**

Driver Licensing Services

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An overview of the Graduated Driver Training and Licensing System Review Report

Ethnic minority groups
1. Introduction

The Department of Transport (DoT) committed to review driver licensing for people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CaLD) backgrounds. A 76 page report on the review (the Review Report) is currently being considered by DoT.

This document provides a short overview of how the Substantive Equality Framework, provided by the Equal Opportunity Commission of Western Australia, was utilised, and contains information obtained from DoT and external sources used to inform the review.

The Graduated Driver Training and Licensing (GDT&L) system was assessed using the Substantive Equality Framework. Substantive equality means a ‘one size fits all’ model for service delivery is no longer an effective means of providing services to a community with different needs.

Stages of the GDT&L System include:

- applying for a Learners Permit, including passing a road rules theory test and eyesight test, provide identification and proof of residency;
- passing the Practical Driving Assessment (PDA);
- completing a log book, recording 25 hours of supervised driving;
- passing the Hazard Perception Test (HPT); and
- obtaining a provisional licence.

The GDT&L system grows in its complexity as research and best practice initiatives are introduced to address the high trauma of young novice drivers. Novice driver definitions introduced in 2008 do not necessarily align with the period of a provisional licence or its application. This means you can be a provisional licence holder and not a novice driver and subsequently be subject to different driving restrictions. The novice driver initiatives imposed night time driving restrictions on overseas licence holders that have not held a licence for six months. Such restrictions pose a significant imposition on new settlers into Western Australia (WA), particularly those from CaLD groups.

The Review Report will present the issues raised by people from CaLD backgrounds in regards to the process to obtain a WA drivers licence, and informs DoT of the stakeholder recommendations to achieve substantive equality.

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1 The term CaLD is used throughout this document in recognition of the CaLD reference group which assisted with the Needs Impact Assessment. Within this report for the purposes of Substantive Equality CaLD relates specifically to ethnic minority groups.
2. Definitions and abbreviations

CaLD

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CaLD). “Culturally and linguistically diverse refers to the wide range of cultural groups and individuals that make up the Australian population. It includes groups and individuals who differ according to religion, race, language and ethnicity except those whose ancestry is Anglo-Saxon, Anglo Celtic, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander”. The focus of the Review Report, and use of the term CaLD, is generally relating to people from minority ethnic backgrounds, such as humanitarian arrivals.

GDT&L system

Graduated Driver Training and Licensing (GDT&L). This system consists of the requirements to obtain a WA driver’s licence as outlined in the Road Traffic Act 1974 (WA) and the Road Traffic (Authorisation to Drive) Regulations 2008.

Novice driver

A person is a novice driver unless the person has, for a period of at least two years or periods adding up to at least two years, held a driver’s licence in Australia or overseas.

- Novice driver (type 1) means a novice driver who is not a novice driver (type 2).
- Novice driver (type 2) means a novice driver who has, for a period of at least one year or periods adding up to at least one year, held a driver’s licence in Australia or overseas.
- Novice driver (type 1A) means a novice driver who has, for a period of at least six months or periods adding up to at least six months, held a driver’s licence in Australia or overseas.

The GDT&L system with novice driver restrictions is illustrated in the following flow chart.

Figure 1: GDT&L system

Source: http://www.ors.wa.gov.au/TopicsRoadSafety/Pages/NoviceDrivers.aspx

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3. Scope and methodology

The GDT&L system was selected as it affects all WA residents seeking to obtain a WA driver's licence. A driver’s licence is often considered necessary to access essential services, and may even affect a person's ability to obtain employment, attend cultural and religious events and/or settle in a new country. The GDT&L system imposes extensive legislative and policy requirements intended to make novice drivers safe drivers by recognising the high rate of road trauma of novice drivers aged between 17 and 24 years.

The GDT&L system requires any new applicant for a WA driver’s licence (unless exempt) to meet the requirements of the system and therefore:
- have access to a vehicle and supervisor;
- pay all necessary DoT fees associated with obtaining a driver’s licence; and
- understand the requirements in English.

People from CaLD groups can find these requirements difficult to meet.

The Substantive Equality Framework examined the GDT&L system with respect to applicants seeking a licence to drive a car (class C) that have never held a driver’s licence.

The project adhered to the Substantive Equality Framework, by undertaking an initial screening of the GDT&L system, followed by a full assessment.

Initial screening of the GDT&L system

Each step of the GDT&L system was identified.

For each step of the GDT&L system, its legislative basis was noted, relevant policy document and/or procedural information was considered to determine the particular steps intention. All public information available on each step was considered and noted.

The initial screening identified the origin of each of the GDT&L requirements and any public consultation undertaken in its development. It was found that the majority of the requirements are the result of:
- the GDT&L system which introduced a more comprehensive licensing system in 2001;
- a review of the GDT&L system, of which approved changes were implemented in 2008 - known as the Novice Driver Recommendations; and
- national policy.

Consultation with internal staff provided further background of the GDT&L system. Barriers were also identified from meetings of the CaLD Driver Licensing Reference Group since its inception in 2006. A draft report prepared in 2008 was sourced, using the feedback from internal and external consultation, jurisdictional analysis and statistics.

The initial screening determined that the barriers for people from CaLD backgrounds to obtain a driver’s licence were considered major, and it was necessary that a full assessment be undertaken, in accordance with the Substantive Equality Framework.
Full assessment

As part of the full assessment, further consultation was undertaken directly with the CaLD Driver Licensing Reference Group to ensure the barriers and recommendations were accurately captured.

An internal Working Group was developed to investigate the delivery of licensing services and identify any concerns in Driver and Vehicle Services (DVS) centres. The information was captured through a staff survey at metropolitan DVS centres. The Working Group provided feedback and comment with respect to the recommendations made by the CaLD Driver Licensing Reference Group.

The Office of Multicultural Interests also held a consultation workshop at the Citiplace Community Centre at the Perth train station. Sixty four people attended, of which 45 were community members and the remainder were representatives of service provider agencies. The participants were from a range of cultural backgrounds including Burundian, Ethiopian, Guinean, Iraqi, Congolese, Sudanese and Thai. The key issues captured by the Office of Multicultural Interests were considered as part of the full assessment of the GDT&L system and are reflected in the Review Report.

The Review Report captures the main barriers faced by people from CaLD backgrounds (minority ethnic groups) when trying to obtain a driver's licence and, where relevant, includes any subsequent initiatives implemented by DVS to overcome these barriers.
4. Driver and Vehicle Services’ CaLD customers

The Review Report undertook a review of data to gain an understanding of who seeks a WA drivers licence, by ethnic background. Such data can provide insight into barriers to the GDT&L system and facilitate effective strategies.

4.1 WA population: Poor English proficiency

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship (Commonwealth) Settlement Database provides information on permanent arrivals to Australia. The poor or nil English proficiency settlers are more likely to experience barriers in obtaining a driver’s licence. The main countries of birth and main languages spoken by settlers to WA in 2010 with poor or nil English proficiency are provided in the following tables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main country of birth</th>
<th>Main language spoken (other than English)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. China - Peoples Republic</td>
<td>1. Arabic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Iraq</td>
<td>4. Dari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. India</td>
<td>5. Karen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Thailand</td>
<td>6. Tamil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Sri Lanka</td>
<td>7. Thai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Iran</td>
<td>8. Farsi (Afghan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Sudan</td>
<td>10. Burmese / Myanmar</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Settlers to WA in 2010

The 2006 Census by the Australian Bureau of Statistics illustrates where the majority of people, who had arrived in WA, resided as well as their English proficiency, which was indicated as ‘not well’ or ‘not at all’. Figure 3 outlines the main 10 Statistical Subdivisions in WA. Those in the metropolitan area are mapped in Figure 4 displaying the main Statistical Local Areas.

Figure 3: 2006 Place of usual residence by arrivals with low English proficiency

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1 Department of Immigration and Citizenship. Settlement Database. Available at www.immi.gov.au/settlement
Figure 4: 2006 Metropolitan place of usual residence by arrivals with low English proficiency

4.1.1 Migration streams

During the period 2006-2010, the majority of people with low English proficiency arrived on the Humanitarian Migration Scheme (40%) and the Family Scheme (39%). Those that arrive through the Family Scheme usually rely on a family member who is already resident in WA, as a sponsor and therefore there is a support network for these arrivals. Humanitarian arrivals, however, may face greater language and cultural barriers to overcome as they do not have this support network.

In 2010, the majority of people with nil or poor English proficiency resided mostly in the City of Canning and City of Stirling Statistical Local Areas. This is indicated in Figure 5.

![Settlers by Statistical Local Area (SLA): Nil and Poor English Proficiency, 2010](image)

Figure 5: Settlers by Statistical Local Area with low English proficiency, 2010

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4.2 Administrative data

When applying for a driver’s licence the applicant is asked to complete a form that requires them to provide their country of birth and country of licence previously held. Both fields are limited in providing an understanding of the customers from CaLD backgrounds, as the country of birth, or origin of licence previously held, does not necessarily indicate the CaLD background of the person.

![Graph showing top 20 country of birth for WA licence holders, 2007](image)

Figure 6: Country of birth of WA licence holders, 2007

Presentation of an overseas driver’s licence when applying for a WA licence is recorded and may be taken into consideration as proof of driving experience or competency. The data analysis on this is again limited, as it does not identify people from CaLD backgrounds who have never held a licence or do not produce the licence.

![Graph showing top 20 country of origin of licence transfers, 2007](image)

Figure 7: Country of origin of licence previously held, 2007
It is likely that the above transfers are indicative of permanent arrival trends to WA and not people from CaLD backgrounds. The *Review Report* concluded that, given the limited data collected by DoT, it is difficult to analyse the barriers for obtaining a driver’s licence, faced by people from CaLD backgrounds.

The table in Figure 8, lists the statistics that would provide some measure of the progress of people from CaLD backgrounds to obtain their WA driver’s licence (refer to the “statistics” column). Any indicator is limited to outside influences, as listed in the adjacent column. Utilising licensing data to analyse the period between licence tests and also the number of re-sits was considered to be beneficial.

It is noted that the following additional information, while not recorded by DoT, would provide greater insight into the barriers faced by people from CaLD backgrounds:

- language/s spoken;
- cultural background (e.g. self-identified ethnicity);
- age and date of arrival in Australia;
- type of test undertaken (where theory test can be delivered in multiple forms);
- reasoning for failure / feedback; and
- feedback sought from DoT.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Row</th>
<th>Statistics</th>
<th>Indication</th>
<th>Available data collect</th>
<th>Data desired</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1   | The backgrounds of clients seeking a driver’s licence. | ✓ May indicate  
• the service needs of clients. | Client fields include:  
• country of birth; and  
• country of origin of licence previously held. | Language/s; and Cultural background |
| 2   | How long do CaLD members take to sit their theory exam after arriving in Australia? | ✓ May indicate:  
• the time needed to prepare for a driver’s licence application.  
✗ Limitations - does not take into consideration the:  
• need/urgency to obtain a licence;  
• age of the applicant (e.g. may have arrived at 15 and waited till 16 to apply); or  
• level of theory test training. | Client fields (row 1) Licensing fields - Theory Test:  
• result;  
• date of test; and  
• location of test. | Age and date of arrival in Australia |
| 3   | What percentage of applicants that fail the theory test are CaLD members?  
How many attempts do CaLD members take to pass their theory test?  
How does this compare to non-CaLD applicants? | ✓ May indicate:  
• the level of difficulty experienced to pass the assessment.  
✗ Limitations - does not identify the following reasons:  
• comprehension of road rules;  
• language and/or cultural barriers;  
• inappropriate testing; or  
• a lack of preparation. | Client fields (row 1) Licensing fields - Theory Test:  
• result;  
• date of test; and  
• location of test. | Type of test Reasoning for failure / Feedback Language/s |
| 4   | Of the people that fail their theory tests how many don’t re-sit and follow through with obtaining a licence?  
What percentage of these are CaLD applicants? | ✓ May indicate:  
• the achievability of obtaining a licence.  
✗ Limitations - does not identify the following reasons:  
• a change in circumstances (employment, moved interstate); or  
• driving without a licence or under suspension. | Client fields (row 1) Licensing fields - Theory Test: (row 3). | |
| 5   | What is the average period of time taken by CaLD members between passing their theory test and sitting their PDA?  
How does this compare with non-CaLD? | ✓ May indicate:  
• the time required by applicants to prepare for the PDA; and/or  
• the access to driver training.  
✗ Limitations - does not identify the following reasons:  
• personal circumstances;  
• cultural background; or  
• access to training. | Client fields (row 1) Licensing fields - Practical Driving Test:  
• result;  
• date of each test; and  
• location of test. | |
| 6   | What is the average period of time taken by CaLD members between passing their PDA and sitting their HPT? | ✓ May indicate:  
• difficulty gaining access to a vehicle to obtain the compulsory 25 supervised driving hours.  
✗ Limitations - does not identify the following reason:  
• personal circumstances. | Client fields (row 1) Licensing fields - Hazard Perception Test:  
• test result;  
• those exempt;  
• date of each test; and  
• location of the test. | Feedback sought from DoT Reason for failure Applicant comments |
| 7   | What percentage of applicants that fail their PDA or HPT and do not come back for a re-sit are CaLD members? | ✓ May indicate:  
• the achievability of obtaining a licence.  
✗ Limitations - does not identify the following reasons:  
• changes in circumstances (employment, moved interstate, etc.); or  
• driving without a licence or under suspension | Client fields (row 1) Licensing fields - Practical Driving Test: (row 5)  
Licensing fields - Hazard Perception Test: (row 6) | |

Figure 8: Statistics that would benefit analysis of the barriers to DoT customers
The Review Report noted that customers can leave feedback on the PDA through DoT’s website. The survey seeks information on the assessment, such as on the number of attempts to pass the PDA and whether the instructions and feedback provided during the assessment were understood. Customer details are asked, including languages spoken where English is not their first, country of birth and year of arrival to Australia. The limitations to the form are that it is now only available online and in English.

During 2010, 103 surveys were received. A total of 13 responses indicated that English was not their first language, and while it is noted that this does not present sufficient evidence to implement or change policy, the 13 responses provided the following information.

- The respondents’ language/s (other than English) included Nepali, Spanish, Mandarin, Arabic, Hindi, Chinese, Taiwanese, Indonesian, French, Spanish, Kirundi, Punjabi, Kannada, Coorg and German.
- Seven respondents did not consider the instructions during the assessment to be clear, while six did.
- Four respondents did not understand the feedback following the assessment, while nine did.
- Six passed the PDA within one or two attempts and six passed within three or four attempts (no response was received to this question for the remaining respondents).
- The reasons to undertake the driving assessment were to transfer their overseas licence (six responses); to apply for their driver’s licence for their first time (five responses); and to upgrade to a higher licence class (one response).

4.3 Survey of DVS staff

As part of the review a survey of DoT staff was undertaken at metropolitan DVS centres to ascertain staff views on their service delivery experience with customers from ethnic minority groups. The intention of the survey was to identify actual driver licensing processes as this may differ to internal instructions and policy documents for a variety of reasons. The survey also attempted to identify the difficulties faced by staff and customers to achieve the requirements of the GDT&L system, and identify possible strategies that could address these barriers.

5. Next steps

The Review Report sets out a number of recommendations for consideration by DoT, to overcome barriers presented by the GDT&L system. Some of these recommendations have already been implemented, such as:

- allowing holders of a permanent visa to drive on a valid overseas licence in WA for three months from when the visa holder is considered to have usually resided in WA;
- translating the instructions of the HPT before the test begins; and
- maintaining individuals’ privacy when taking digital photos for drivers licences.

While some of the report’s recommendations have been successfully implemented, many require the proposal to be further researched and analysed to understand its implications, such as any road safety issues, national policy and the effects on DoT resources and infrastructure.
Achieving substantive equality in remote areas of Western Australia

Driver Licensing Services
Introduction

The majority of remote Aboriginal communities do not presently have ready access to consistent and appropriate driver education and licensing services. The high incarceration rate for driving without a valid licence may be attributed to lack of access to licensing services and the difficulties that Aboriginal people, particularly those in remote communities, have in relation to meeting the requirements for obtaining a driver’s licence.

There are limited opportunities for people living in remote communities to complete the 25 hours of supervised driving. There is minimal (if any) access to driving schools in remote communities and, due to the high rate of unlicensed drivers, there are very few people that would have held their licence for the periods of time prescribed in the Road Traffic (Authorisation to Drive) Regulations 2008 which would allow them to deliver driving instruction. The shortage of suitable vehicles and the cost of fuel in remote communities also limit the opportunities for novice drivers to complete their supervised driving requirement.

The mandatory six month period between passing the Practical Driving Assessment (PDA) and obtaining a provisional driver’s licence creates a number of issues. People drive without an appropriate supervisor during this learning period due to necessity, and subsequently incur fines or are prosecuted for unlicensed driving. Logbooks are lost or are completed incorrectly which means that some or all of the hours already completed cannot be considered. This further delays the applicant in obtaining a licence and also deprives them from gaining employment opportunities where a driver’s licence is required.

Aboriginal people are also over represented in road crashes with death and hospitalisation rates approximately three times higher than for non-Aboriginal people. The rates of death are high across all age groups, but particularly amongst young people.

2. Committees and reports

In November 2001, the State Government announced a special inquiry into the response by government agencies to complaints of family violence and child abuse in Aboriginal communities. While focusing on family violence and child abuse, the report did provide comment that:

while lack of a driver’s licence is an inconvenience in urban areas, it compounds disadvantage in remote communities. Consequently these additional stressors were considered likely to have an adverse impact on family violence and child abuse.

One of the key recommendations of the report was the provision of a permanent policing presence in selected remote areas to provide a first line of response for victims and a basis of safety for community members.

In April 2007, the State Government established a committee to report on the extent and nature of Aboriginal licensing issues and imprisonment, and to make recommendations on legislative and non-legislative measures to reduce the number of Aboriginal people in Western Australia (WA) entering the justice system for driver’s licence and fine default offences. Unlicensed driving, and driving offences generally, greatly contribute to Aboriginal people in WA being over represented in jail.

The committee’s report provided the Department of Transport (DoT) with the opportunity to provide a meaningful contribution to achieving a positive outcome by significantly increasing the number of licensed drivers in remote areas. An action plan to increase the number of Aboriginal people who are able to obtain and maintain a driver’s licence was developed and piloted in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands. Consideration would then be given to rolling out successful strategies of the pilot to other remote Aboriginal communities where appropriate.
In addition to the above, a Department of the Premier and Cabinet submission to the Cabinet Standing Committee on Law and Order entitled ‘Reducing Indigenous Imprisonment - Licensing and Fine Default Strategy’ considered the provision of licensing services at remote Aboriginal communities was critical in addressing a range of issues.

In 2010, the Attorney General established a Senior Officer’s Group to investigate driver licensing and fines enforcement issues and develop strategies to address them. However, to provide a coordinated State Government approach to driver licensing issues a Remote Areas Drivers Licensing Steering Committee was established by DoT. The committee comprises membership of senior representatives from key government stakeholders.

### 3. Consultation by DoT

DoT has undertaken extensive consultation and has commenced a number of initiatives that will in the long term provide considerable benefits to people living in remote areas of the state and for the community as a whole. The ground work that has been undertaken, together with the development of positive relationships, form a platform that enables establishment of appropriate and sustainable programs throughout the state.

High level consultation has taken place with the Remote Areas Drivers Licensing Steering Committee, comprising Director Generals and other senior personnel from the following key State Government agencies.

- DoT
- WA Police
- Department of the Attorney General
- Insurance Commission of Western Australia
- Office of Road Safety
- Department of Indigenous Affairs
- Department of Housing
- Department of Corrective Services
- Department of Education
- Department of Training and Workforce Development
- Department of Regional Development and Lands

Consultation has also been undertaken at an operational level with State Government agencies and stakeholders within regional and remote areas.

DoT has worked closely with WA Police to recognize the gap in delivering licensing services to remote areas and arrangements have been implemented for WA Police to deliver licensing services. This includes offline over the counter services and PDAs at a number of communities where WA Police have established a permanent presence through a Multi-Functional Police Facility. In October 2010, WA Police and DoT formalised the arrangement in a Memorandum of Understanding.

Consultation has also been undertaken with a significant number of Aboriginal communities and corporations in regard to the provision of licensing services as part of DoT’s Remote Areas Licensing Program. Members of DoT’s Driver and Vehicle Services (DVS) and Regional Services travel to remote locations throughout the state and conduct licensing services as well as provide licensing information for community members.
Consultation will continue with Aboriginal communities, community groups, the WA Police, the mining industry and others in the management, development and implementation of sustainable licensing programs and education packages to assist Aboriginal people in obtaining and maintaining a driver’s licence.

Extensive consultation with remote Aboriginal communities throughout the Pilbara, Goldfields-Esperance and Kimberley regions has recently been undertaken by senior DoT personnel as a preliminary to the implementation of a Remote Licensing Services program. This will involve the establishment of four teams that will visit remote communities on a regular basis to provide full licensing services.

4. Consultation outcomes

Consultation has been undertaken with a large number of Aboriginal communities within the Kimberley, Pilbara and Goldfields-Esperance regions.

The outcomes that have been identified following the consultation undertaken by DoT and other key stakeholders are:

1. there is a genuine need to improve outcomes for people living in remote areas through obtainment and retention of a driver’s licence;
2. accessibility to licensing services needs to be significantly improved, to increase the ability for people to obtain a driver’s licence and also to increase employment opportunities;
3. there has been a positive response to the proposed delivery of regular licensing services at the communities;
4. capacity building and empowerment of communities to deliver licensing services should be encouraged;
5. there has been engagement with community members to obtain a driver’s licence;
6. there is a need for access and equity in terms of a key government service;
7. there is a need for access and equity in terms of a key government service;
8. there is a need to provide small business opportunities through driver training;
9. there is a need to provide licensing and other government services in remote areas in a cost effective way that is acceptable to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people so that it will be fully utilised and maintained; and
10. there is a need to enhance the esteem of participating communities.
5. Barriers to obtaining and maintaining a drivers licence

The consultation that has taken place with Aboriginal communities and other key stakeholders over the preceding years has identified a number of barriers preventing people seeking to obtain and maintain a valid driver’s licence.

They include:

- licence suspensions for non-payment of fines (often for non-driving related offences);
- access to licensing and payment information and services;
- appropriate driver education materials to learn the traffic laws;
- literacy issues;
- qualified / interested supervisors for 25 hours of supervised driving;
- access to appropriate roadworthy vehicles for training and testing; and
- financial costs associated with the driver licensing process.

These barriers contribute to a relatively high incidence of unlicensed driving which can result in significant fines being imposed, imprisonment and increased road trauma. If fines and penalties remain outstanding the person will be disqualified from being able to apply for or hold a driver’s licence. They are likely to continue driving unlicensed, entering into a sometimes unbreakable cycle.

A number of other impacts and barriers were also identified including a lack of:

- reliable mail services for timely receiving licence renewal notices;
- community awareness of the importance of holding a valid driver’s licence;
- cultural awareness by government employees;
- recurrent funding to create a sustainable model and implementation and ongoing support;
- employment opportunities while not licensed;
- communication between external agencies and government departments;
- initiatives to promote ownership and empowerment; and
- certainty of the fines enforcement requirements.
6. What DoT is doing to overcome the barriers

DoT recognises that the attainment and maintenance of driver’s licences is a critical component in improving outcomes for Aboriginal people, particularly those living in remote areas of the state.

DoT has therefore embarked on a range of initiatives that focus on:

- increasing the number of licensed drivers to reduce the incidence of unlicensed driving and associated fines;
- access to licensing related payment facilities to reduce the incidence of fines default and associated imprisonment; and
- service delivery by local community organisations that will provide more equitable access to government services and enhance local employment opportunities.

DoT also recognises the strong link between holding a driver’s licence and employment prospects.

Consequently, DoT commenced a Remote Areas Licensing Program in 2008. The aim of the program is to overcome or remove the barriers to assist people living in the more remote areas of the state, including remote Aboriginal communities, to successfully obtain and retain a driver’s licence, while providing education that promotes safe driving practices. The program also aims to provide the delivery of a sustainable licensing service to remote communities. The program has gathered momentum since its inception and has gained wide-spread support from Aboriginal and community groups.

Further initiatives that DoT has explored and/or implemented in its endeavour to overcome the many barriers to obtain and maintain a driver’s licence are:

Drivers Licensing

- Introduction of a Verification of Identity form to assist applicants living in remote areas to apply for a driver’s licence where they are genuinely unable to meet the standard proof of identity requirements. This initiative has overcome a significant barrier, as many Aboriginal people were unable to obtain appropriate documentation to prove their identity for the grant of a driver’s licence.
- New licence applicants aged 25 years and over and living in remote areas, who do not have access to an appropriate driving supervisor, are able to complete a Safe Driver Course as an alternative to having to complete the 25 hours of supervised driving.

Access to services

- DoT has worked closely with WA Police in the establishment of licensing services delivered at the Multi-Functional Police Facilities at the remote communities of Balgo, Blackstone, Burringurrah, Bidyadanga, Jigalong, Looma, Warakurna, Warmun and driving tests at Kalumburu.
- The Kimberley Regional Office has established an effective Mobile Aboriginal Licensing Unit that delivers licensing services to a number of remote Aboriginal communities, including communities along the Dampier Peninsular.
- The Shire of Ngaanyatjarrah has been appointed as an online Licensing Agent to service Warburton and surrounding communities in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands. The shire provides a full range of licensing services and local people no longer have to travel great distances to access them.
- The Kalumburu Aboriginal Corporation was established as an offline Licensing Agent to service the remote Kalumburu community. For a number of reasons, including funding and changing priorities, the corporation has decided to suspend the licensing service.
• The introduction of a regular remote licensing service to remote communities has been explored by DoT. Cabinet has subsequently provided funding to this service in the East and West of the Kimberley, the Pilbara and the Goldfields-Esperance regions. DoT is currently in the process of obtaining resources and recruiting staff to commence operations. In addition, a remote service is provided to the Burringurrah community.

• Members of the Remote Areas Licensing team and the Kalgoorlie-Goldfields Regional Office have also participated in a number of licensing visits to communities located in the Central Desert with other government agencies. This has resulted in many new licences being granted and others being renewed. They also provide information relating to vehicle licensing matters.

Partnership arrangements

• DoT’s DVS and Regional Services teams provide training and ongoing support, printed documentation and stationery requirements for partners.

• Fortescue Metals Group has been appointed as an agent to deliver the road rules theory test as part of its Aboriginal pre-employment training program at South Hedland and Roebourne.

• Roebourne Regional Prison and Ngarlyandu Bindirri Aboriginal Corporation (Roebourne); East Kimberley CDEP (Kununurra); Karrayili Adult Education Centre (Fitzroy Crossing); Winun Ngari and Emama Nguda Aboriginal Corporations (Derby); Wila Gutharra (Geraldton) have been appointed as agents to deliver the road rules theory test as part of their respective driver training programs. DoT provides continual support to the programs.

• South Metropolitan Youth Link (SMYL) has been appointed as an agent to deliver the road rules theory test as part of its respective driver training programs on the Dampier Peninsular and in the Central Desert. DoT provides continual support to the programs.

• A Memorandum of Understanding between DoT and the Department of Corrective Services (DCS) allows DCS staff to perform specified driver licensing services to complement its Driver Education Program, including learner’s permit theory testing, eyesight testing, verifying and witnessing driver’s licence applications and coordinating driver’s licence renewals.

• DoT has negotiated an agreement with DCS where officers collect licensing monies and paperwork when undertaking their regular circuit in the lands and then forward it on to the DoT Kalgoorlie-Goldfields Regional Office upon their return to Kalgoorlie. This allows paperwork and client records to be updated in a timely manner. It also reduces delays in processing and removes the likelihood of people being inadvertently charged with driving offences if they do not have the payment receipt to prove they hold a valid licence.

 Licensing and education materials

• More culturally appropriate driver educational material will be developed. Some information materials have been reviewed and content simplified where appropriate. DoT has commenced development of information brochures in simplified English to assist people with lower literacy levels. The ‘Six Steps to Getting a Driver’s Licence’ has been published and brochures on other aspects of the licensing system (including vehicle licensing) will be developed. This is an ongoing process.

• The road rules theory test has been reviewed and rewritten in more appropriate terminology with greater use of pictures. The test has been reviewed in consultation with partners for appropriateness of delivery to people with literacy and numeracy difficulties. Additionally, DoT provides the option of theory testing being delivered orally to assist applicants that have barriers precluding them from undertaking a computerised or written test.

• DoT has also developed guidelines for groups seeking to establish a driver training program in their community. This can be an education program to assist in passing the theory test or mentor programs to deliver practical instruction or fulfill the 25 hour supervised driving requirement. The guidelines cover a number of topics, including considerations before establishing a program, legislative and insurance requirements and possible sources for funding.
Community open days

- The Remote Areas Licensing team and staff from regional offices attend community open days throughout the state and provide information on various licensing matters and undertake licence eligibility checks for people. A number of government agencies attend open days at a community to provide services and information. Having the agencies together and available to the community at the same time allows people to move from the DoT ‘stall’ straight to the Sheriff’s Office stall to help them work out time-to-pay arrangements, or a Work and Development Order for court fines. They can then return and be provided assistance with progressing towards obtaining a driver’s licence for the first time, or regaining it. The Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages provides services in relation to the issue of birth certificates and has introduced a ‘Confirmation of Birth’ letter to assist in the driver’s licence process.

Future directions

DoT will continue to be innovative and focussed in its endeavours to eliminate or significantly reduce the barriers preventing Aboriginal people from obtaining and maintaining a driver’s licence.