



Changes to Mandatory Driving Tests for Motorcycle Riders Aged 85 Years and Older

What is changing?

In December 2013, the removal of mandatory practical driving assessments (PDA) for drivers aged 85 years and over, prior to the renewal of a car (C class) driver's licence came into effect. This policy has now been extended to motorcycle riders aged 85 years and older.

Riders aged 85 years and older will no longer be required to undertake a PDA prior to the renewal of their motorcycle (R and R-E class) driver's licence, unless recommended by a medical practitioner or required by the Department of Transport (DoT) to do so.

When does the change start?

The change will take effect from Monday 5 February 2018.

Why is it changing?

The decision was based on a lack of research evidence supporting this policy. Similar to older car drivers, older motorcycle riders did not pose an unacceptable risk; and that outdated processes based on misconceptions or stereotypes can be potentially discriminatory.

Older drivers and riders are not disproportionately represented in crash statistics. When compared to other road user groups, the number of older drivers involved in road crashes is very low.

DoT already has stringent safety requirements in place for all drivers, including mandatory reporting of medical conditions or driving impairments for all licence holders to identify potentially high-risk drivers of all ages.

The cessation of mandatory PDAs for older motorcycle riders will also align Western Australia (WA) with practices already in place in many other Australian jurisdictions, except New South Wales (NSW) and South Australia.

Who will be affected by the changes?

Motorcycle riders aged 85 years or above will no longer be required to pass a PDA in order to retain their motorcycle authorisation. Regardless of age, doctors concerned about a person's medical fitness to safely drive may still recommend a person undertake a PDA.

What if I drive a truck?

Drivers aged 85 years and older who want to continue driving light rigid (LR) class and above will still need to complete a PDA in a vehicle of the highest class they wish to continue driving, before they are able to renew their driver's licence.

Drivers aged 85 years and older whose licence authorises them to drive heavy vehicles (LR class or above) may choose to surrender these classes by completing a Variation or Surrender of Driver's Licence (E55) form, and only retain a car (C class) and/or motorcycle (R class) driver's licence. If this is done, the driver will not be required to pass a PDA to renew their car or motorcycle licence.

Will I still need to do a medical?

If you are 80 years of age or older, an annual medical assessment prior to the renewal of your driver's licence will still be mandatory. Also, drivers of any age who currently undertake regular medical assessments should continue to do so.

What if I have already failed a PDA?

If you have recently failed an R class PDA you are still required to pass a PDA before you can renew your licence.

My licence expires before 5 February 2018. If I wait until 5 February 2018 to renew my licence, do I have to undertake a PDA?

You will not have to undertake a PDA unless recommended by your doctor; or you have a motorcycle or heavy vehicle class licence. However, you are unable to drive once your licence has expired.

If your R class licence has expired within the six months prior to 5 February 2018, and you have not failed a PDA, you may renew it after 5 February 2018 without undertaking a PDA by calling 13 11 56 or attending your nearest Driver and Vehicle Services centre or agent.

If you don't have compulsory driving assessments anymore, how will you know if older drivers are safe to keep driving?

DoT has stringent safety requirements in place for all drivers. Mandatory reporting of medical conditions or driving impairments for all licence holders was introduced in 2008.

It is important for older drivers to be treated the same as all other drivers and to only undertake assessments for the same reasons that apply to other drivers.

Older drivers are generally safe drivers who do not pose an unacceptable risk and are not over represented in crash statistics. Normal ageing does not increase crash risk as many older drivers take steps to compensate for any gradual decline in driving abilities. They tend to drive less, make shorter trips, drive during low traffic volumes, drive in good driving conditions and low speed zones, and choose less hazardous roads.

There are also laws in place that mean all drivers must notify DoT of any changes in their medical fitness to drive. DoT also receives notifications from Western Australian police, doctors, family members and members of the public about concerns over a driver's ability. All genuine reports are followed up.

Is this change being implemented to reduce State Government costs?

No. PDAs for older drivers make up a very small percentage of all PDAs, and removing these will have little financial impact.

Is WA the only state not mandating PDAs for drivers 85 years or older?

With the exception of NSW and SA, no other state requires older drivers to undertake mandatory PDAs to renew a motorcycle driver's licence.

How do I know if I'm a safe motorcycle rider?

All drivers, regardless of age, need to regularly and honestly assess their own driving skills to keep themselves and others safe. Drivers who accurately assess their driving skills are more likely to adjust their driving habits and stay safe on the road for longer.

Assessing your own driving regularly will help you determine how safe you are on the road, and if there may be any issues affecting your driving.

You should regularly ask yourself these questions:

- Are you having trouble seeing signs, road markings, kerbs, medians, other vehicles, other motorcyclists, cyclists and/or pedestrians, especially at night?
- Is it getting harder to judge gaps in the traffic when merging or turning at intersections?
- Does your mind sometimes wander when you drive?
- Do you sometimes feel overwhelmed by the traffic environment, particularly when turning at intersections?
- Are you sometimes confused as to who should give way?
- Have you found yourself driving too slowly and holding up the traffic flow?
- Are you often being 'honked' at by other motorists?
- Are you missing (or reacting more slowly to) unexpected hazards, such as pedestrians crossing the road?
- Are you feeling more tired while driving, even on short trips?
- Are you having trouble judging distance, resulting in a small collision in the car park or with stationary objects?
- Have you had a near-miss or actual crash in the past three years where you were at fault?
- Has a friend or family member recently said they are worried about your driving?
- Do you sometimes get lost whilst driving on familiar routes?
- Has your doctor suggested you limit your driving or think about stopping driving altogether?

If you answered 'yes' to some of these questions, it may indicate that you could be at risk when driving.

You should consider talking to your doctor if you're concerned about your driving, to rule out any medical issues. Your doctor may also be able to discuss ideas for regulating your driving so that you feel safer, such as not driving at night or during busy times of the day.

I'm still not sure about whether I'm a safe driver, who can I talk to?

If you're still not sure whether you're a safe driver or could be at risk:

- discuss your driving with your doctor;
- talk to your family, close friends or others about your driving and see what their opinion is;
- listen to the people who know you best and care about you most; and/or
- consider brushing up on your road rules and driving skills anyway, just to be sure.

What if I've got concerns about someone's driving?

If you have concerns about a friend or family member's ability to drive safely, you should first consider discussing your concerns with them directly. It may not be an easy discussion, but talking the issues through can help the person realise that they need to take some action.

If they don't want to discuss their driving with you, suggest that the person consult their doctor for an objective opinion.

You can write to DoT expressing your concerns about someone's ability to drive. You need to include your personal details (such as name and address), as well as the details of the person you are concerned about, and the reasons for your concern. All genuine complaints made in writing will be followed up.

You can write to:

General Manager
Driver and Vehicle Services
Department of Transport
GPO Box R1290
Perth WA 6844