

RESPONSE TO PETITION

Petition Number: 706
Petition Sponsored by: Gaelle Broad
Directed to: Hon Melissa Horne MP
Tabled on:
Petition Grievance:

The petition of certain citizens of the State of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Council that Victoria is the only state or territory in Australia that still requires probationary drivers licence holders to be aged 18 years or over.

In Victoria, young people living in rural and regional areas with limited or no public transport are disadvantaged, and not everyone has a friend or family member to ferry them around. Reducing the minimum probationary driving age to 17 years in line with other states will remove barriers for young people and open doors for educational and employment opportunities.

Petition Action:

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council call on the Government to reduce the minimum probationary driving age to 17 years and provide incentives for learner drivers to do professional driver training, like those offered in New South Wales.

Reply:

I thank the Member for tabling the petition.

As outlined in Petition 625, while I can appreciate the desire for young people to obtain a probationary licence at a younger age, all the available evidence shows that reducing the minimum licensing age to 17 years would lead to a substantial increase in road trauma.

Current evidence strongly links driver maturity and supervised driving experience with better safety outcomes for young drivers.

Statistics show that while young and maturing drivers (aged 18–25 years) represent 11.8 per cent of Victoria's licensed drivers on our roads, they unfortunately accounted for 20.5 per cent of drivers and 31.3 per cent of motorcyclists involved in fatal crashes in Victoria last year.

Victoria's Graduated Licensing System (GLS), which specifies the minimum probationary licence age of 18, is considered a nationally exemplar approach due to strong evidence that an older minimum licensing age is associated with fewer young driver crashes.

The Australian Graduated Licensing System (GLS) policy framework, endorsed in 2014 by Commonwealth, State and Territory transport ministers, identifies a minimum age of 18 years for the Probationary (solo) licence, as exemplar policy. This is due to strong evidence that an older minimum licensing age is associated with fewer young driver crashes and lower young driver crash risk. Victoria is the only Australian State or Territory with the exemplar licensing age of 18 years.

The Victorian Government recognises professional drive instructors have a critical role to play in the learn-to-drive process, particularly in the early stages of the GLS. While learner drivers and supervising drivers are encouraged to work in partnership with driving instructors during the learning process, it is acknowledged it would be impractical and costly to require learners to accrue the mandated 120 driving hours through professional driving instruction alone. Which is why the GLS system focuses on supporting the learner

driver and supervising driver partnership to maximise the quantity and quality of the learner driver experience.

I acknowledge that for a young person, the ability to drive a vehicle brings with it increased mobility and wider range of potential employment opportunity, but the risks outlined above far outweigh any perceived benefits.

The Victorian Government is committed to ensuring all Victorians are safe on and around our roads and reducing the minimum licensing age would not be in the community's best interests.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Melissa Horne', with a stylized, flowing script.

Hon Melissa Horne MP

Minister for Roads and Road Safety