



National Transport Commission

6 May 2016

Mr Andrew Homer
Executive Officer
Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee
Parliament House
Spring Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3002



Dear Mr Homer,

Inquiry into lowering the probationary driving age in Victoria to seventeen

I refer to the letter of 21 March 2016 from Mr Geoff Howard MP, Chairperson of the Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee, addressed to NTC Commissioner Ms Nola Bransgrove OAM. The letter invited a submission that addressed the terms of reference of the Committee's Inquiry into lowering the probationary driving age in Victoria to 17 years. I write to provide a submission from the NTC to that Inquiry.

The NTC is an independent statutory body charged with improving the productivity, safety and environmental performance of Australia's road, rail and intermodal transport systems by developing nationally consistent regulatory and operational reform of road, rail and intermodal transport.

We strongly advocate that a national approach be adopted to setting the conditions for Graduated Licensing Schemes (GLS) that guide the safe progression of new drivers from non-driver to fully licensed driver. Such conditions should provide the best safety and mobility outcomes for both the young driver and the wider community. This includes determining the minimum age at which a driver should be allowed to drive or ride 'solo' in a motor vehicle.

To this end, we recommend that Victoria adopt the national policy framework for GLS endorsed by all Australian transport ministers on the Transport and Infrastructure Council in November 2014. This framework was informed by the best available evidence on the safety effects of different GLS components, and took into account the varied circumstances that apply across jurisdictions.

The Australian GLS policy framework reportⁱ identified licensing age, whereby the older a young person is when they are licensed the safer they are, as a key element of an effective GLS. The policy framework endorsed by ministers identified a probationary licensing age of 18 as exemplar policy, and recommended that jurisdictions that could not achieve this should aim for a median licensing age in real terms of 18 years or older. The report noted that the median age at which a young person obtains a P1 licence in NSW is 18 years and 4 months. While in Queensland, 49% of young people who obtain a P1 licence are aged 19 years or older.ⁱⁱ

Evaluations cited in the report show increased safety benefits at higher ages, with licensing at age 17 being better than at 16 and licensing at age 18 being better than at 17.ⁱⁱⁱ Crash modelling undertaken by CASR for a South Australian GLS review predicted that increasing the licensing age to 18 from 17 would produce a 20% reduction in crashes among 16-24 year olds.^{iv} The report notes that available evidence strongly supports Victoria retaining the age of licensing at 18 years.^v

Given the strength of the available research evidence, we consider that the lowering of the probationary driving age to seventeen would have adverse impact on the health and safety of Victorian road users. If you would like more information, please contact Dr Jeff Potter, Project Director – Productivity, Safety and Environment on 03 9236 5003, or by email at jpotter@ntc.gov.au.

Yours sincerely,



Paul Retter AM
Chief Executive Officer and Commissioner

ⁱ Australian graduated licensing scheme policy framework (October 2014)
<http://roadsafety.transport.nsw.gov.au/downloads/gls.pdf> (accessed 28 April 2016)

ⁱⁱ Op.cit. p12

ⁱⁱⁱ Op.cit pp 11-12

^{iv} Op.cit. p11

^v Op.cit. p12