

Changes to Driver licensing system in WA

With new laws for novice drivers being introduced in July 2007, Western Australia now has the toughest laws in Australia for Learner and Provisional drivers.

These new laws have received a mixed response with some hailing them as necessary because of the high number of young people dying or being seriously injured as a result of road trauma. Others however have raised concerns that the new laws will be tough to enforce, and that good drivers will face unfair restrictions.

What are the new laws?

The Western Australian Government agreed to recommendations put forward by the Office of Road Safety. The following is a summary of the new laws.

1. There will be a minimum six months for the Learner Phase 2 period.
2. A Learner's permit will be valid for three years (instead of one) without a renewal fee.
3. Tightened requirements for supervisory drivers, including zero Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) limit.
4. Night time curfew - provisional drivers for the first six months will not be allowed to drive between midnight and 5.00am unless traveling for work, education or to receive medical attention.
5. Peer passenger restrictions for Provisional drivers for the first six months. This means P-platers will only be allowed to carry one peer passenger at a time.
6. Learner and Provisional drivers will now have a zero Blood Alcohol Concentration limit (0.02% is the current limit).
7. Graduated demerit point system (reduced number of demerit points for P-platers) and issue warning letters to deter unsafe driving practices.

Arguments supporting the new changes:

- Reduce the over representation of young people suffering death and serious injury from road crashes.
- Improve training and allow young drivers to be more experienced when they begin driving on their own and in different situations.
- Drivers will move through a slower paced, lower risk conditions, progressively lifting restrictions therefore developing more experience (inexperience is the number one reason for road crashes in young people).

Arguments not supporting the changes:

- The laws would be hard to enforce, especially in rural areas.
- Unfairly targeting Provisional drivers.
- Good drivers face unfair restrictions.
- Possibly have more P-platers driving without their plates up to avoid detection.

For further information visit: www.officeofroadsafety.wa.gov.au