

Licensing Changes Leave Young Tasmanians Behind

5 May 2019

TasCOSS and Youth Network of Tasmania (YNOT) have called on the State Government to ensure essential safety related changes to graduated driver licensing requirements are accompanied by appropriate resourcing, support and assistance for Tasmanians already facing barriers to obtain a driver licence.

TasCOSS CEO Ms Kym Goodes and YNOT CEO Ms Tania Hunt said: “Driver safety is an absolute priority and we applaud the changes announced today for beginning to bring Tasmania’s driver licensing requirements into line with other States.

“However evidence tells us these changes will severely impact young drivers in particular and those in areas with poor access to public transport.

Only 63% of young Tasmanians have a driver licence. We need to understand what the challenges and barriers are for the 21,000 young Tasmanians who don’t. It is clear that access to licensing also depends on where you live. Tasmania’s wealthiest suburbs have higher rates of young people with licences than Tasmania’s poorest suburbs, which are often the same suburbs under-served by public transport.

In Taroona-Bonnet Hill, for example, 18.6% of the age 17-24 population were granted a licence in 2016-17 compared to 6.8% of the age 17-24 population in Clarendon Vale and 9.3% in Smithton.

“Not being able to get where you need to go can impact on someone’s ability to get a job, access education or training, healthcare and other services. It also impact on their ability to access essentials like groceries.

“Right now in our State, jobs are on the increase in hospitality, tourism and agriculture, but they’re often in places that in particular are not well serviced by public transport. Someone looking work in these areas must have access to a car and driver licence to access these jobs.”

Ms Goodes said existing supports including driver mentoring programs available in some communities provided potential solutions but were already oversubscribed and have waiting lists of up to 7 months, with shortages of mentors the greatest challenge

“What we’re asking for on this issue is no different from the way the Government acts to support small businesses to understand and comply with changes in workplace safety legislation,” she said.

“It has the same obligation to support Tasmanians to understand and comply with these new licensing requirements.

“When the Premier talks about opportunities to unlock the potential of Tasmanians not currently able to participate in emerging jobs, there is no better example than this. The government must make a conscious decision not to leave some Tasmanians behind as access to local jobs and training continues to be moved further out of their reach,” Ms Goodes said.

Ms Hunt said: “Young people are telling us that limited access too driver mentors and vehicles, the cost of purchasing private driving lessons and the lack of after hour driving opportunities are significant barriers to gaining their licence.

.../2

“This, coupled with a lack of safe, affordable and reliable public transport options, impacts on a young person’s ability to gain employment and contributes to a sense of social isolation particularly in rural and remote areas.”

Josh, aged 20 from Sorell, said: “It would be better if we had more driver mentor programs over this way. Most, if not all of the driver mentor programs available are on the other side of the river, making them difficult for people to get to.”

What we’re asking for:

- Independent research into the social and economic impact of the changes and barriers to obtaining a driver licence in Tasmania’s communities.
- Consultation with communities, learner drivers including young people to gain local knowledge and solutions.
- A commitment now to provide increased funding to mitigate the impact of increased hours through evidence-based, community-led solutions.

Ends

More information and interviews:

Ms Kym Goodes, CEO, TasCOSS, 0407 528 767

Ms Tania Hunt, CEO, YNOT, 0427 466 189