

**Submission  
No 5**

## **SUPPORT FOR RURAL AND REGIONAL LEARNER DRIVERS**

**Organisation:** Shoalhaven City Council

**Date Received:** 16 April 2021

The Chair,  
Staysafe Committee,  
Parliament House,  
Macquarie Street,  
Sydney NSW 2000.

**Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety (Staysafe) – submission into support for rural and regional learner drivers**

The Hon. Lou Amato MLC  
Committee Chair

Thank you for the opportunity for Shoalhaven City Council to provide a submission into the Staysafe Committee inquiry into support for rural and regional learner drivers.

The Shoalhaven local government area (LGA) is approximately 160 kilometres from the centre of Sydney on the south coast of NSW.

Shoalhaven City Council covers 4660 square kilometres.

Most of the towns and villages are located on the eastern side of the 126kms of Princes Hwy which acts as a natural transport spine down the length of the LGA, with towns and villages located in remote areas.

In rural and regional areas there are many challenges that learner drivers face to get the required training and experience when obtaining a licence.

Having a driver's licence can make a vast difference to a person's life, especially in rural and regional locations.

Having a licence can provide opportunities including employment (a licence is a prerequisite for many jobs), educational opportunities, housing, independence, social interaction, overcoming isolation, having a connection with community, access to health services and be used as formal identification. A driver's licence is independence.

In regional and remote areas there are barriers to a learner obtaining their licence which may include:

- A lack of government licencing services
- There are no services available
- The location of the service may not be centrally located or easily accessible (with greater distances to travel)
- If there are services available, the opening hours may not suit, a lack of public transport options may limit the ability to get to the service and the cost to access a service may be a factor.
- There are many reasons as to why parents, family and friends of the learner may not be able to teach the learner, including: work, not have a licence themselves, be unwell, or socio-economic circumstances prevent them from accessing a driving school (if any are available in the area), to teach the learner driver or take them to access services.

There are limited options for rural and regional learners to access driver training opportunities.

Although there are some driver training opportunities for rural and remote learner drivers to access, these are usually limited, often due to the reasons listed above.

Some available services require certain criteria to be met or may be reliant on funding from external bodies. Often this funding is not continued and the service is ended.

Learner drivers in the rural and regional areas do not have the same opportunities to access services as their city counterparts and this is an issue that is very relevant to the Shoalhaven.