

**Submission
No 8**

SUPPORT FOR RURAL AND REGIONAL LEARNER DRIVERS

Organisation: Wollondilly Shire Council

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Parliament Inquiry – Learning to drive in rural and regional NSW

Support for rural and regional learner drivers

The challenges faced by learner drivers in Wollondilly Shire Local Government area:

- Wollondilly Shire Local Government area has 850+ km of road network. A large proportion of our roads are non-speed sign posted hence it has the default State speed limit of 100kph. The roads are mainly typical of rural roads characteristics being narrow and winding with unsealed shoulders, limited delineation and signage, no street lighting, lack of connecting footpaths, kerb and gutter and lower standard pavement surface of two way - single lane with opposing traffic.
- Transport for NSW 2015-2019 crash data for Wollondilly Shire statistics recorded the number of casualty crashes of motor controllers aged 17-25 years is 29.2% of all crashes in comparison to the Sydney Metropolitan casualty crashes for motor controllers aged 17-25 years being 18.4%. This is quite a significant difference for young drivers. Speed, fatigue and alcohol has a higher percentage of aged 17-25 years drivers compared with Sydney Metropolitan drivers of the same age group.
- Currently there are no Service NSW centres situated within the Wollondilly Shire. The nearest Service NSW centres are located to the South in Mittagong, approximately 44km's and to the North in Gregory Hills, approximately 30km's from Picton. There is however, a limited mobile bus service that visits two locations (Warragamba & Tahmoor) every quarter (3 monthly) for one day only with limited services available.
- With online services available through Service NSW to apply for a licence, potential learner drivers are often unable to attend in person to undertake the tests. They are reliant on family, friends or neighbours to travel to their closest Service NSW centre and public transport is unavailable if they live out of town.
- There is very limited public transport available to travel to existing out of town Service NSW centres as well as into townships. There are three local bus services within the Shire that operate during daylight hours and into early evenings up to 8pm. The rail line is non-electrified and trains run from Campbelltown to Moss Vale (Southern Highlands Line) on hourly basis during weekdays with less frequent times on weekends. Therefore, to access a Service NSW centre via public transport, would involve travel by train and bus in combination. There is no taxi service working out of Wollondilly Shire and the current taxi service shares with Camden Council Local Government area.

- The required 120 driving hours to be logged into the log book can be challenging to undertake when distance is an issue with lack of facilities as mentioned, especially with most families requiring both parents to work. Also, as many parents work out of area and where travel time is an additional 2 hours minimum per day, this impacts on the availability of time to teach a learner driver, making it even more of a challenge?
- Wollondilly Shire has been identified within the Greater Macarthur Growth Area by the NSW Government hence further growth is inevitable. The current household income for Wollondilly is compatible with Greater Sydney. The population growth in the next 10 years is expected to see at least 6% increase of 17-25 year olds. This will further impact the limited infrastructure and transportation facilities.
- Until the area is well populated, currently it cannot sustain small businesses such as driving schools, which leads to challenges for learner drivers to engage professional driving instructors for practice driving lessons. Professional driving instructors come from neighbouring Local Government areas which in turn restricts when lessons can be taken up due to the distance of travel and is costly.

Recommendation from Council:

1. Better infrastructure (roads, traffic delineation, street lighting) – by way of transfer of regional roads to state and additional grant funding opportunities such as the Fixing Country Roads program that Wollondilly is not currently eligible to apply for.
2. Improved transport facilities and network such as electrified rail, bus services, safe shelters (bus shelters, queue area for pick up)
3. Attract, expand and retain driving school professionals for learner drivers
4. Establish formal Service NSW centres in the Shire to assist local learner drivers
5. Continue support from Transport NSW in addressing crashes through grant funding such as Blackspot, Safer Roads Programs