

# How can government improve results for our most vulnerable (at-risk) children and their families?

A Request for Information – Your thoughts on 4-5 pages

**Response template**

Deadline: 5pm, 4 December 2014



## How can government improve outcomes for our most vulnerable (at-risk) children and their families?

Please write your response in the template below.

Please note:

- you **do not** need to answer all sections – just the ones where you have information you would like to contribute
- please expand or delete boxes as you need to. Please provide no more than 5 double sided pages of text and font size of at least 10 points
- please **do not** send us reports or other documents but **do** include references or links to supporting evidence or information
- please submit your response to [socialinvestment@treasury.govt.nz](mailto:socialinvestment@treasury.govt.nz) by 5pm, 4 December 2014.

Thank you for your time and effort in providing this information.

### Who do we want to focus on?

We want to focus on how to get better results for children and their families *at most risk of poor education, criminal justice and employment outcomes*. They will probably have multiple risk factors, including being:

- children vulnerable to abuse or neglect
- unsupported/vulnerable teen parents
- children and young people with conduct problems
- children needing a range of services to succeed in school
- people not in safe, secure housing
- children in families with gang connections
- children in families with prison connections
- violent families, including victims and perpetrators.

## Part 1: Your contact details and response summary

<b>Organisation Name:</b>	New Zealand Automobile Association
<b>Contact Person Name:</b>	Jayne Gale
<b>Position:</b>	<p>Principal Adviser, Motoring Policy</p> <p>Motoring Affairs</p> <p>The advocacy and policy team works on a public good basis to advocate for outcomes that improve matters for motorists, such as road safety, mobility and reduced costs/ value for money. Motoring Affairs is independent of, and has a mandate to comment in conflict with if necessary, the commercial interests of the wider AA including in this specific instance AA Driver Licensing, AA Driver Training, AA Motoring Services or AA Insurance. This submission has been developed on the basis of advocacy research, work undertaken through AA Research Foundation charitable trust, and involvement with the Community Driver Mentor Programme, without consultation with AA commercial interests.</p>
<b>Phone number:</b>	04 9319992
<b>Email address:</b>	jgale@aa.co.nz
<b>What geographical location does your response relate to?</b>	National
<b>What group of people or issues is your response targeted towards?</b>	<p>Disadvantaged youth age 14-19; Maori and Pacific Island, in lower socioeconomic areas; urban or isolated rural people. These people are often unemployed and tend to be teen parents with disadvantaged children.</p> <p>The issue concerns access to health services, employment and other facilities given the majority in New Zealand and in particular in remote areas can only be accessed by car and a driver licence qualification is required to operate a car legally. There are strong links between driver licence status and employment status and income levels.</p> <p>Driving unlicensed creates a criminal justice burden on families and a significant administration cost for Government. There is also good evidence that there is also a disproportionate injury burden on this demographic.</p>
<b>Does your response relate to a new service or modification of existing services?</b>	Both

## Part 2: Your RFI response

### A: What works best to identify and engage the children and their families most at-risk of poor education, criminal justice and employment outcomes?

For example...

- what are successful ways to find and engage the most hard to reach children and families?

**Poverty and unemployment tend to go hand in hand. While education providers emphasise vocational skills as an antidote to unemployment it is often overlooked that the New Zealand government effectively requires qualifications to access the majority of health services, and jobs. These qualifications have become increasingly difficult to obtain but do not qualify for the same level of secondary or tertiary education support as vocational skills. This applies as much to youth as young parents.**

#### **Employment outcomes: identify unemployed youth without a Full or Restricted driver licence.**

Todd Price, Work and Income, indicated that ~60% of unemployed (at all ages) have no driver licence, and of the 40% remainder, the majority have only a Learner licence, which does not permit a driver to drive solo (unsupervised). This is in stark contrast with employed persons, the overwhelming majority of whom have a full driver licence. Some old US research found those with independent mobility eight times more likely to be employed than those relying on public transport (ie causal, not the other way around) even when corrected for ethnicity (in that case black or Hispanic) and socioeconomic status. This is because independent mobility significantly increases the catchment area for an individual's job search and their ability to get to work and fulfil employment criteria.

Leah Gates, Auckland Chamber of Commerce assessed unskilled job advertisements in Auckland, finding 80% require a driver licence, and of those jobs that don't, employers reject applicants who cannot travel independently to work. Also under an employer's WorkSafe requirements, they cannot even tacitly endorse someone driving outside their licence conditions eg on an L licence driving solo to work or for work, requiring staff to drive outside their R licence curfew (10pm-6am) or with passengers.

Todd Price also indicated that job availability and hourly rate of pay climbs significantly on the level of driver licence that a WINZ client has.

Synergia has developed an interim model for Auckland Transport with some assumptions about progression rates on the GDLS, employment opportunities and changes in income to calculate the increased jobs, income and decreased unemployment benefit reliance over 10 years through increasing a) Learner licence uptake b) Restricted licence uptake and c) both. I can provide this.

#### **The driver licence is one of the few qualifications enforced by Police. Illegal driving gives rise to both negative injury and justice outcomes: fine and demerit point history**

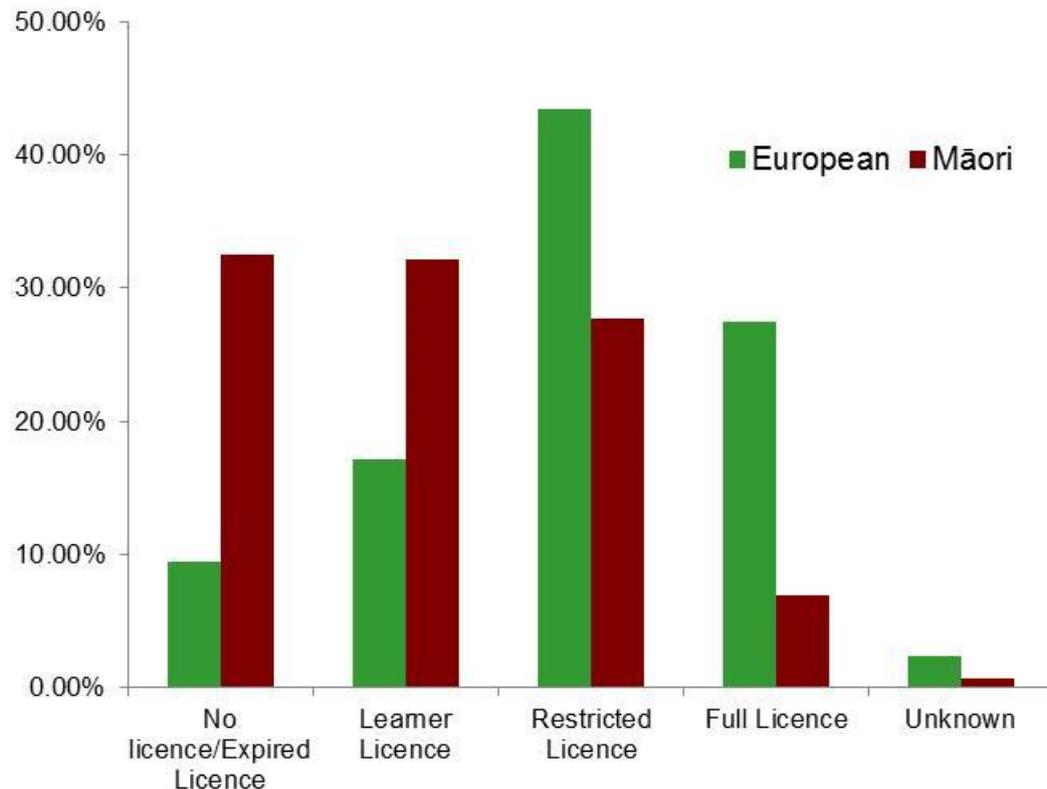
NZTA has developed a logit model with a robust predictive power for motor vehicle crash and injury outcomes by matching driver licences with fine and demerit point history. "*Using logit modelling to predict the crash outcomes of New Zealand drivers*" Veltman R presented to Safety conference 2012. <http://acrs.org.au/publications/conference-papers/database/> Veltman. This identifies by driver licence recidivist offenders at risk of crashing, the most common being young males age 16-24.

While we do not know what proportion on the road hold licence classes by Maori compared to European ethnicities, we can see evidence from the licence status in the Crash Analysis System data. Of drivers 15-19 in road injury crashes 2003-2008, at each stage of the graduated licence system European drivers had a higher licence classes than Maori.

#### **Where information about vocational qualifications is available via the National Qualifications**

Framework the drivers licence process is not part of that framework (although there are unit standards that assist students, although these are not currently used much). Nor is data about driver licensing available from the Household Employment Survey or the Census. This is a significant omission from labour market statistics.

This graph shows of young drivers involved in injury crashes 2003-2008, what percent of each licence status is Maori and what European (excludes other, or unknown, ethnicities).



And/Or

**B: How could existing services or supports be improved to make the biggest difference to children and their families at most risk of poor education, criminal justice and employment outcomes?**

For example...

- how could existing services be better delivered? (this could include services directly provided by government, or by private or not-for-profit providers or other groups)

There needs to be greater recognition that access to employment, health and social services itself requires a qualification in most parts of the country. This implies there is a need to Improve Driver Licence (DL) process:

ACC (Neil Shaw) is leading a Young Driver Signature Project in Mangere (due to the injury outcomes and costs to ACC from unlicensed youth drivers). A key report is at:

<http://www.nzta.govt.nz/site-resources/content/about/docs/media/oia/oia-1462-hurley-attachment.pdf> and a presentation that summarises the issues at: <http://trafinz.org.nz/workspace/downloads/shaw-neil-542de57f3843c.pdf>

This project has identified a range of barriers in the way the current driver licence system is set

up, which means that it is harder for vulnerable youth in specific communities and cultures to achieve their driver licence. This is resulting in higher injury outcomes, lower employment, increased engagement with Police enforcement. In particular, the inter-generational experience in Mangere is that a driver licence is not necessary. It is common that none of the adults in multiple generations have held a driver licence; hence they either see no need for, are less knowledgeable about, assisting their youth through the GDLS. Further, the GDLS has been made increasingly harder over recent years. The theory test (the Road Code) Learner licence requires English literacy at a high reading age; it is no longer a simple “scratchy test”. The Restricted licence has been made harder, so the standard requires 120 hours of supervised driving practice. This means over the course of a year or so a car, petrol and a dedicated and willing supervisor who has held a Full licence for at least two years. This disproportionately impacts lower socioeconomic groups, children of parents who work shift hours or multiple jobs, with large families, no access to a parent or mentor, and cultures that do not have a history of driver licence training.

NZTA is currently reviewing the Graduated Driver Licence System (GDLS) and is due to recommend changes by 2016. We recommend that this review specifically investigate ways to change the DL process to support those who are disadvantaged through poverty, lack of parental support and supervision, or community.

#### **A smarter targeted process for infringement fines**

The AA Research Foundation has commissioned a data research project using Justice Courts data, Court Collections data, Police infringements data and NZTA driver licence data, which is due to be published in January 2015, which will further elucidate problems for young people leading them to engage with the justice system. The majority of fines imposed on young drivers are referred to Court unpaid (for example, it would appear that 90% of fines for Warrant of Fitness and vehicle registration are referred to Court unpaid). The largest group of fines referred to Court unpaid appears to be for breaches in the Graduated Driver Licence System.

While the data does not show ethnicity, ACC’s research and crash data indicate that Maori and Pacific Island youth are hugely over-represented in statistics on driving either unlicensed or in breach of licence conditions (eg driving unsupervised on a Learner licence or carrying passengers on a Restricted licence). Vehicle registration and Warrant of Fitness offences are also a source of concern, with young drivers often in older vehicles. Traffic offending makes up nearly half of all first time Court appearances and a significant portion of fines, of which the vast majority are not paid and end up in the Justice system.

We recommend further research to ascertain whether traffic infringements are contributing to overrepresentation of Maori in the Justice system, particularly as lack of driver licence can be relatively easily addressed.

Currently repeat offenders can receive the same fine penalty multiple times. During the presentation of the Veltman research, noted above, it was commented that one teen received over a hundred fines the year before he died in a car crash. A system that repeats the same penalty a hundred times without taking a closer look at what is driving that behaviour and intervening, is a system that fails youth like him and fails the families and communities of these youth.

Once a young offender has garnered multiple fines, something different is needed. There is an opportunity to introduce a constructive intervention that would change the direction that a young person’s life takes them. Suggestions include

- training young persons with Warrant of Fitness breaches in vehicle maintenance and safety and to deliver so many hours of community service working on vehicles for vulnerable communities;
- training young people driving unlicensed in the Road Code and requiring them to sit the

Learner test;

- or for those driving solo on an L licence to put in driving hours while supervised doing a community service (eg delivering Meals on Wheels) and sit their R test
- issuing "compliance" for those carrying passengers they can avoid their penalty if they pass their Full licence test
- for repeat speed offenders to undertake a speed awareness course as is operated successfully in the UK
- for those with drink or drug driving ensure they are assessed for addiction or abuse, and enter appropriate treatment programs.

These alternative courses could be administered by Police, while engaging with other agencies that are trained to identify wider issues and support the young person to rectify their behaviour.

- **what would need to change to improve the effectiveness of services for the most at-risk groups?**

Greater integration and collaboration across government agencies. Leah Gates runs CadetMax, Auckland Chamber of Commerce's works skills and driver licensing course in Mangere. Leah comments that school leavers without a Learner licence are two years away from a Full licence. During those two years they are on unemployment benefit, which carries a high cost to government (well in excess of the cost to assist the person through the driver licence process) and affects youths self-esteem and lifestyle choices.

We believe that a single critical change would be to integrate the various levels of the driver licence into the NCEA framework, so that young people would achieve unit standards from passing each stage. This would also mean that teachers have an incentive to provide for students to achieve at least a Learner licence while at school. Currently teachers perceive the driver licence qualification as competing with, or a distraction from, academic learning. However, for this group of underprivileged youth, a driver licence opens a wide range of viable careers. There is an NCEA unit standard 3462 on the Road Code that readies students to sit the Learner licence test. Placing some targets on schools to ensure students do not leave school without at least a Learner licence would be a major step forward.

Typical entry-level unskilled jobs for youth might include such unglamorous roles as pizza delivery, cleaning, trades apprentices, rental vehicle cleaning etc. Access to a vehicle and ability to drive legally also enables access to a much wider geographic and time spread of job opportunities typified by part-time or casual work, such as at supermarkets. .

A Full car (Class 1) licence is the pre-requisite for higher (eg truck, passenger services and specialist vehicle) driver licences. While these higher level licences attract Student Loan funding, the Class 1 licence does not. This means that those for whom money is an issue will find a barrier to achieving that a more affluent young person does not.

A major barrier to uptake for the unit standards relating to driver licensing is teachers being unfamiliar with the material and not being convinced about the key role that mobility and driving qualifications plays in entry level jobs for young people. We believe that a significant shift could be achieved by using the 'teacher-led innovation fund' to support and motivate teachers to use these unit standards:

<http://www.education.govt.nz/ministry-of-education/specific-initiatives/investing-in-educational-success/teacher-led-innovation-fund/>

And/Or

**C: What issues or problems are not currently being addressed that increase the risks to some children of not achieving in education or employment?**

**For example...**

- **what are the particular issues in your community?**

As above, a segment of society is disadvantaged because of the parochial “Eurocentric” way that we expect driver licensing to be delivered through the traditional family unit, although this is not the cultural expectations of other ethnicities and disadvantages those who need the most help.

As above, youth are getting embroiled in the Justice system by being referred to Court for not paying traffic infringement fines, which start from relatively minor offences but can rapidly snowball.

Youth can proceed to incur multiple offences with no red flag being raised that they may need additional assessment and intervention.

- **are there any services needed which aren't currently available? What are they?**

Learner licence: Group training and sessions to learn the Road Code including literacy skills and access to computers; assistance collating evidence of identity and other documentation (eg eye tests) and assistance with test bookings; transport to and from driver licence testing centres; evaluation of readiness to sit the test.

Restricted licence – to achieve 120 hours supervised practice: access to a vehicle with a current valid Warrant of Fitness and to supervisors (who must have held a Full NZ driver licence for 2 years, have a safe driving record and be vetted to work with vulnerable children), L Plates and fuel; knowledge of the testing criteria and readiness to sit the test.

All licences: Full financial support for disadvantaged youth for driver licence tests. Make eligible for student loan to train and sit for Class 1 car driver licence (Class 1 light vehicle is a prerequisite for higher classes eg heavy vehicles and passenger service licences, which already are eligible for student loan, but Class 1 is not).

Currently through the Community Driver Mentor Programme which provides around 30 hours it costs \$3-5000 per young person to get them from L to R licences. This is provided at no cost to the government by advantaged families, but youth from disadvantaged families have no access to essential elements in the GDLS.

The GDLS should be considered a qualification under the NCEA system, accruing credits as youth progress through it. Currently it sits totally outside the formal education system so those who cannot obtain this training through their advantaged family positions have no option but to choose either to drive illegally or limit their social participation in the workforce, education and community.

Having driver licences outside of the universal education system reinforces the ‘haves’ and the ‘have nots’.

Interventions for youth receiving fines and demerits that they can't pay, to ensure they are placed back onto the track to being legal, safe and engaged in the economy. Provide a compliance system whereby fines are deferred as long as the young person is participating in an educational programme to obtain a driver licence, and waived once the licence is obtained.

- **are the underlying causes of poor outcomes being addressed?**

There are minor initiatives to assist some groups to achieve driver licences through local government, community, or Maori organisations. These are a drop in the bucket against the sheer numbers of disadvantaged youth who need assistance to obtain their driver licence. There were also significant funding cuts to this group in 2009 so that many of these courses were

closed.

The AA and NZTA have partnered in a Community Driver Mentor Programme, to link up volunteer and professional driving instructors as mentors with disadvantaged youth as identified by their local teachers or community. Again, this is a drop in the bucket. Anecdotal evidence is that a significant number of youth who obtain their Restricted driver licence through the mentoring programme almost immediately obtain employment or otherwise alter their living situation for the better.

The AA is also providing at its own cost the Ignition programme, which provides three free driving lessons for AA Members for a nominated Learner driver.

There are also minor interventions in the Justice system for young drivers who are identified as repeat offenders, for example Right Track for youth traffic offenders. However, this is patchy (regionally and in total numbers) and there is no certainty of funding.

There is recent funding to support recidivist drink-drug interventions around the country, but again this needs funding continuity and certainty, and greater regional coverage and participation rates are needed.

And/Or

**D: What new interventions, services or arrangements could make the biggest difference for at-risk children and their families?**

**For example...**

- **what existing models used in New Zealand or internationally could be used in your area?**

For driver licensing Australia has well established community mentor programmes for disadvantaged communities. There is also a model called “Keys 2 Drive” which engages directly with young people’s supervising drivers so that the supervisors understand better their role in assisting the young person through the process.

For youth justice outcomes, there is an international body of work on Therapeutic Jurisprudence, which bases the Justice system on interventions that are therapeutic (ie correct the behaviour) rather than based purely on punishment. While Thinker in Residence in Adelaide Judge Peggy Hora produced a paper recommending changes to the Australian justice system based on therapeutic jurisprudence principles, for example.

- **how can services respond to the complexity and diversity of family circumstances?**

Community based delivery that varies based on the specific circumstances. Working with volunteer groups; approving standards that provide flexible best practice guidelines for education providers to adapt to their students and their family circumstances.

Group interventions rather than leaving people to handle situations individually without support, whether driver licence applicants who fail, and lose courage to re-sit, or youth offenders faced with fines they cannot pay.

- **how can the government better target and measure results for at-risk children and their families? (eg, through outcomes-based contracts)**

Commission research to measure unlicensed or licence breach driving in New Zealand, to have a base level. Need to track percentage of youth that achieve licences, and also failure rates in specific regions. Feedback loops from licence testers as to areas that require greater input.

Put a target on schools for the number of children leaving school without a Learner driver licence.

Measure the number of schools who deliver the Road Code unit standard 3462 that supports the

Learner licence and other unit standards that support the Restricted licence.

Monitor the number of fines issued for licence breaches; proportion of fines being referred to Court unpaid; and ethnicity variables around these measures.

To target vulnerable youth for interventions (eg support to achieve driver licence):

- all unemployed youth without at least a Restricted driver licence.
- Youth who 'pool' (fail to progress on the driver licence system) within 5 years and are from 2014 are now unable to renew their L or R licence without resitting the L test; this group is at high risk of dropping out of the driver licence system, and either not driving and hence have reduced employment opportunities, or continuing to drive unlicensed at increased risk of infringements, debt and Court.
- Youth receiving multiple traffic infringements within a year are at higher risk of death/ injury.