

moving rightalong

OBLIGATIONS AND
OPPORTUNITIES FOR
OLDER DRIVERS



Information Sheet 2

Fitness to drive



Government of South Australia

Department of Planning,
Transport and Infrastructure

Moving Right Along: Obligations and Opportunities for Older Drivers encourages safer, greener and more active travel for older South Australians.

It comprises a series of Information Sheets about fitness to drive and legal responsibilities, driver assessments, ideas for maintaining the ability to drive safely and planning for the time when you, a family member or friend will decide to drive less or stop driving altogether.

Fitness to drive

As you age, you may become aware of small changes in your physical and mental abilities - it might be more difficult to turn your head, or perhaps you have noticed that your response to an unexpected situation is a little slower than it used to be.

Some other changes you may notice as an older driver could be:

- feeling uncomfortable or nervous while driving, especially in heavy traffic
- awareness of changes in your judgement of distances when you are driving at night e.g. closeness to other vehicles, anticipating when to slow down to turn or stop
- having difficulty maintaining concentration while driving
- having trouble judging gaps in traffic and at intersections
- having more near misses or getting small dents and scratches on your vehicle
- having friends and family not wanting to drive with you
- having difficulty in checking your blind spot when changing lanes
- getting lost when you are driving
- having a slower response to an unexpected situation
- having difficulty scanning the road environment for pedestrians, parked cars and hazards
- feeling that driving has become an ordeal, instead of being a pleasure.

Any of these factors could influence your fitness to drive.

Both your safety and the safety of other road users are influenced by your fitness to drive. Fitness to drive is your ability to drive safely without being adversely affected by your physical ability, injury, a medical or mental health condition, or by medication you are taking.

Most drivers do not like having their driving ability questioned. It is when the driver does not acknowledge that there is a problem with their driving that they become a danger to themselves and others.

Being honest with yourself by asking questions, getting answers and making decisions could make a difference to your life. Even a simple decision could save your life, or the life of someone you love.

I'm not sure if I'm fit to drive. What will I do?

- As a first step, talk to someone - a close friend, a trusted family member, someone who you know will be honest with you. Ask them to help you and to give their opinion of your driving ability. Ask them for the truth.
- Take a self-assessment questionnaire - *The Driver's Handbook* includes information for older drivers and a self-assessment/self-scoring questionnaire with explanations of the correct answers. This could be enough to indicate that your driving ability is satisfactory, or indicate the need for a more comprehensive evaluation.

The self-assessment questionnaire showed some concerns with my driving but I need to continue to drive. What can I do?

- Take some driving lessons to update your driving skills and knowledge of the *Australian Road Rules*.
- Revise your knowledge of the Australian Road Rules by doing the online road rules refresh quiz at www.mylicence.sa.gov.au
- Consult your health professional for an assessment of your general and medical health, and your eyesight.
- If you have a medical condition and are not sure of how it may affect your fitness to drive please discuss this with your health professional.
- As a result of this assessment, or independent of it, your health professional may recommend to the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure that you undertake a Practical Driving Assessment to ensure your continued ability to drive a motor vehicle safely. The recommendation may include that certain conditions or restrictions are placed on your driver's licence, enabling you to continue driving but at specified times and within a specified radius of your home.
- You could decide to stop driving for a short while to consider any driving problems, explore travel options and review your situation.

If you no longer need your current class of driver's licence, you can change it back to a **class C (car)**. When you advise the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure of your decision you will be issued with a new licence.



I have decided to stop driving. What will I do with my licence?

Some older drivers know when they should stop driving. They realise that they could possibly be a danger to themselves, their passengers and other road users.

If you have decided to stop driving, you may either return your licence to a Service SA Customer Service Centre in person or post it to the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure with a letter stating your decision. You will receive a refund for the unexpired portion of your licence.

Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure
GPO Box 1533, ADELAIDE SA 5001

If you decide to stop driving, there are many other ways in which to travel. Using public transport, community bus or taxi and walking to close destinations are all travel options.

For more Information please refer to:

Information Sheet 4
Driver Medical Assessment

Information Sheet 5
Practical Driving Assessment

Information Sheet 6
Travel options

Your legal responsibility

As a licensed driver in South Australia and regardless of your age, you are **legally required** to advise the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure in writing as soon as you are diagnosed with an illness, disease or disability, or take medication that could impair your ability to operate any motor vehicle effectively and safely.

Also, health professionals are **legally required** to notify the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure as soon as they consider that you suffer from a physical or mental illness, disability or deficiency, or take medication that would be likely to endanger the public if you drive a motor vehicle.

The health professional does not need your permission as this notification is **compulsory by law**.

Department of Planning,
Transport and Infrastructure
GPO Box 1533, ADELAIDE SA 5001

The consequences for failing to notify the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure of a reportable medical condition and continuing to drive are severe.

If involved in a crash:

- you may be charged with related driving offences and with failing to notify the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure of a reportable medical condition
- you may be sued for any damages to people or property caused by the driver in that crash
- your private car insurance coverage may be affected.

Moving Right Along Information Sheets

- 1 Road safety and older drivers
- 2 Fitness to drive
- 3 Driving and your health
- 4 Driver Medical Assessment
- 5 Practical Driving Assessment
- 6 Travel options
- 7 Buying a safer car
- 8 Motorised mobility scooters
- 9 Retiring from driving
- 10 Are you worried about someone's driving?
- 11 For more information

For resources and contact details of relevant government departments and other organisations refer to:

Information Sheet 11 Version 2

Department of Planning, Transport
and Infrastructure

GPO Box 1533, ADELAIDE SA 5001
Telephone 13 10 84

ISBN: 978-0-7590-0171-8

© South Australian Government 2012