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National body working in partnership to prevent avoidable blindness and improve vision care

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A win for drivers with central vision loss

13 Jun

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MEDIA RELEASE

A change to the Assessing Fitness to Drive (AFTD) guidelines that left a number of Australians with central vision loss unable to obtain a licence, or fearful of losing their right to drive, is set to be reversed.

Vision 2020 Australia was alerted to the issue by individuals from the vision impaired and telescopic driving community who raised concerns about the 2016 AFTD guidelines review, particularly in relation to the visual requirements of a conditional drivers licence.

Prior to the review the guidelines recommended that, while there were no set standards for telescopic lenses, drivers wanting to use these devices could have their fitness to drive individually assessed by a qualified eye health professional.

In the 2016 AFTD guidelines review, in what is understood to be an inadvertent change, the wording was amended, stating telescopic lenses were not an acceptable aid to meet the standards of a conditional licence.

Carla Northam, CEO of Vision 2020 Australia, says: 'Following advocacy from Vision 2020 Australia and communication with the National Transport Commission, we understand this change to the guidelines will be reviewed and, in all likelihood, reversed.'

'This will mean Australians with central vision loss, who wish to use telescopic lenses to drive, will go back to being assessed on a case-by-case basis.'

'For these individuals, an amendment to the guidelines will be life changing.'

Vision 2020 Australia understands the Council of Australian Governments' Transport and Infrastructure Council will take a vote to return to the previous wording in the coming weeks.

In the meantime, all state and territory licencing authorities have been asked to follow the pre-2016 AFTD review guidelines until a final decision is made.

Ms Northam says: 'We thank the National Transport Commission for looking into this important issue and we look forward to a positive final result.'

'We call on the Council of Australian Governments' Transport and Infrastructure Council to hand down a favourable decision.'

State and territory licencing authorities have been asked to review any licences that may have been revoked due to this change since the 2016 guidelines were published.

Individuals who feel they have lost their drivers licence or have had their licence application denied based on the 2016 guidelines are also encouraged to visit their local licensing authority and request a review.

ENDS

Vision 2020 Australia would like to thank Dr Sharon Oberstein from the [School of Optometry and Vision Science](#) at the University of New South Wales for her expert guidance on bioptic driving.

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About Vision 2020 Australia

As the national peak body for the eye health and vision care sector, Vision 2020 Australia represents almost 50 member organisations involved in: local and global eye care; health promotion; low vision support; vision rehabilitation; eye research; professional assistance; and community support. Established in October 2000, Vision 2020 Australia is part of *VISION 2020: The Right to Sight*, a global initiative of the World Health Organisation and the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness.



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