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Special Minister of State, Minister for Roads, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy, Minister for Jobs and Tourism

Jihad Dib

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Media Release

Foreign licence holders given deadline to get a NSW licence

Thursday, 29 February 2024

As part of the NSW Government's focus on road safety, all motorists driving on a foreign licence will now have a maximum of six months to convert to a NSW licence if they want to reside in the state and remain on the road.

The tightening of overseas licence usage removes a loophole left behind by the Liberal-National government that only required new arrivals to NSW from 1 July 2023 to convert their licence within six months of residing here.

Under Regulation changes announced today, anyone who has been driving on an overseas licence – regardless of when they arrived in NSW – will also be required to switch to a NSW licence. Existing residents will have 12 months from tomorrow to undertake this process.

The previous government's loophole led to thousands of drivers racking up demerit points but remaining beyond the reach of NSW authorities.

In one case, a driver accrued more than 35 demerit points, an outcome unthinkable to the nearly seven million other drivers in NSW.

Many drivers – some of whom have spent years on a foreign licence - will need to pass a practical driving test to remain behind the wheel. Others, whose licenses are from countries which have road systems more compatible with NSW, will need to simply convert their licence.

In the five-year period between 2018-2022 there were 23 fatal crashes and 468 serious injury crashes involving a driver or rider on an overseas licence in NSW.

According to preliminary data from 2023, a further five fatal crashes involved drivers or riders not on an overseas licence.

Drivers who have been using a foreign licence before July 1 last year and want to remain on the road must now obtain a NSW licence by 1 March 2025.

This timeframe will allow Service NSW sufficient time to process tests and licences while still handling the normal flow of learner and provisional licence tests.

To absorb the increased demand, Service NSW has opened a Driver Testing Centre in Macquarie Fields, a second dedicated driver testing centre along with one in St. Marys.

Minister for Roads John Graham said:

“The changes announced today are squarely aimed at ensuring the safety of all seven million drivers on our roads. More drivers on a NSW licence sooner will improve the standard of driving in NSW and therefore safety overall.

“The former government talked tough in this area but what they left behind was a work-lite, safety left in the backseat, compromise that squibbed the challenge in this space.

“This Regulation change means no one will be able to drive around for years and years on NSW roads without coming under the NSW licence system. The Government is not going to cop people running up demerit points with impunity.

“When everyone comes under the same set of rules then safety is enhanced, but for belligerent rule breakers who have had a place to hide behind overseas licences, they will now face the full force of NSW law.”

Minister for Customer Service, Jihad Dib said:

“Settling into a new country can be challenging enough, which is why Service NSW is making driver testing as quick and easy as possible by opening another centre dedicated to helping new arrivals, as well as local residents, get on the road sooner.”

“The new Macquarie Fields Driver Testing Centre will guide temporary visa holders through every step of the process to get them on the road as quickly, and more importantly, as safely as possible.”

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