

## **Enhancing Police Practice with ‘Fitness To Drive’**

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### **Abstract**

Police play a significant role in identifying potentially unfit drivers and riders on our roads and keeping our roads safe. This presentation explains how Victoria Police has enhanced its referral practices in dealing with fitness to drive issues through the development of a Licence Review Field to enable monitoring of collision associated referrals, the introduction of a new Licence Review Referral form and the implementation of a letter for police to give to drivers where there has been direct police involvement in the referral process.

### **Background**

Over the last three years, the Victoria Police, Road Policing Strategy Division (RPSD) has been working to better understand fitness to drive issues and to enhance the Licence Review Referral processes. Victoria Police members may become aware of potential fitness to drive issues through collision investigations, direct observations of driving, traffic camera files, attendance at an incident or through professionals, family members or the community reporting their concerns.

### **Enhancing police practice with fitness to drive**

#### ***Monitoring referrals***

In November 2015 a new Licence Review field was created in the Traffic Incident System (TIS) to record when members submit a licence review request associated with a collision. A 12 month review of this data from the 13 Nov 2015 to 13 Nov 2016 (Victoria Police, 2016) shows that there were 1,933 police reported collisions where a Licence Review was submitted for a motorist. This represents 11% of all police reported trauma collisions, including 16 fatal and 477 serious injury collisions. Drivers were aged between 16 and 99 years with a median age of 68 years. Older drivers (75 plus) were over represented. This age group accounted for 6% of licence holders, yet represented 39% of the drivers subject to a licence review.

#### ***Making referrals***

In October 2016, Victoria Police introduced a new electronic Licence Review Form to enhance the information collected by police and referred to the VicRoads Medical Review section. This form is assisting to distinguish the reasons for referral and is providing enhanced information for the Medical Review Section. Initial findings from VicRoads show that the form has enhanced targeted data capture from police which is contributing to a more efficient analysis and assessment of the driver's situation. In the early stages, some members experienced problems with the new electronic process.

#### ***Raising awareness***

In October 2016, Victoria Police introduced a letter to send to drivers when police submit a licence review as a result of direct police involvement. This letter was introduced to provide transparency and a police point of contact for the driver. Further, it was hoped that the letter would prompt drivers to self-reflect on their driving status. Previously, the driver would only receive a letter from VicRoads. Initial feedback from VicRoads is that the letter allows drivers to go directly to the source of their referral and seek clarification if required.

**Conclusion**

Police play a key role in referring potentially at risk drivers and riders to VicRoads through the submission of a Licence Review Referral. New changes implemented in 2015 and 2016 are assisting to enhance understanding of police referrals and to refine the referral and assessment process. Fitness to drive is an issue affecting all drivers and riders, irrespective of age. However, older drivers are overrepresented in collisions in Victoria involving fitness to drive concerns. Further work is needed, by all stakeholders, to ensure early identification of fitness to drive issues and appropriate intervention prior to the onset of a collision.

**References**

Victoria Police (2016). Statistical Summary. *Licence reviews submitted following a collision, R12M*. Road Policing Operations and Investigation Division.