

## Submission to NTC by Orthoptics Australia regarding amendments to “Assessing Fitness to Drive 2021”

Orthoptists are university educated Health Care Practitioners, who are registered with the Orthoptic Board of Australia and through this recognised by AHPRA. They are independent practitioners, involved on a daily basis with visual rehabilitation in patients with visual loss related to reduced visual acuity, reduced peripheral vision and diplopia.

As such we request that amendments be made to the draft document to acknowledge the orthoptists involvement with the assessment and reporting of patients who have had their driving ability affected by either a new or long-standing change to their vision. This includes:

### EDITORIAL AMMENDMENTS

**10.2.1** “where a person does not meet the visual acuity standard at initial assessment, they may be referred for further assessment by an optometrist, ophthalmologist **or orthoptist**.”

“**Assessment method** in the case of a private vehicle owner, if the persons visual acuity is just below that required by the standard by the person is otherwise alert, has normal reaction times and good physical coordination, an optometrist, ophthalmologist or **orthoptist** can recommend granting of a conditional licence.”

**10.2.2** “A long-standing field defect, such as from childhood, may lead to visual adaptation. Such defects-for example, a hemianopia or monocular vision need to be assessed by an optometrist/**orthoptist** or ophthalmologist for a conditional licence to be considered.....”

**Monocular Vision:** People with monocular vision are not generally fit to drive a commercial vehicle. However, if an optometrist, ophthalmologist or **orthoptist** assesses that person...”

**10.2.3 Diplopia:** Any person who reports or is suspected of experiencing diplopia within 20 degrees from central fixation should be referred for assessment by an optometrist, ophthalmologist or **orthoptist**.

**10.3** Medical standards for licensing where the disciplines of optometry or ophthalmology are mentioned we request that orthoptics be included.

**The rationale for the above changes / inclusions of orthoptics:** currently orthoptists conduct full assessments of drivers with vision defects and report to ophthalmologists and optometrists. The experience of an orthoptist to enable this expertise has included going on-road with a client and make a judgement call as to their ability to compensate for their visual defect. As such many ophthalmologists/optometrists ask an orthoptist to perform an on-road assessment, which is similar to an Occupational therapist who performs a



**cognitive on-road driving assessment. An orthoptists report has been used to support opinions from an optometrist/ophthalmologist to recommend a client continuing to drive with their visual defect. Therefore, we believe that the orthoptists role should be formalised.**

## **B CHANGE OF ROLE**

### **10.2.9 Practical driver assessments**

Orthoptists and Occupational Therapists are involved with drivers who require an on-road driving assessments to determine their ability to perform on road. Often the driver will have multiple disabilities from a stroke or traumatic brain injury which will also involve visual disabilities. These visual disabilities will often mean that the driver is borderline for meeting the vision standards for driving.

As such we request that the following clause replace the second paragraph in Section 10.2.9 on Practical driver assessments.

Replacement paragraph **with “A practical driver assessment with an orthoptist may be helpful in assessing the ability to process visual information in borderline cases who have a mild form of a disorder that affects the vision.”** (refer to Part A section 2.3.1 Practical driver assessments).

We would further propose that the above paragraph be included in section 2.3.1.

**The rationale:** An orthoptist is able to understand the vision-based driving concerns that a driver will have while performing an on-road assessment. As such a driving Occupational Therapist will ask an Orthoptist to attend an on-road driving assessment to add their expertise and knowledge to the assessment.

Orthoptists, through their training, have a high level of understanding of the ability of a driver to process visual information.

Kind regards,

