Driver Vision Standards

In New South Wales, the Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) has a legal responsibility to ensure all drivers have the appropriate skills and ability, and are medically fit to hold a driver licence. To meet this responsibility, NSW road transport legislation gives RMS the authority to ask any driver licence holder or applicant to provide medical evidence of their suitability to drive and/or to undergo a driver assessment.

This is facilitated by a medical report. In most cases, RMS provides the medical report form to the driver who will present it to the health professional for completion at the time of the examination. This form is the key communication between health professionals and RMS. It should be completed with details of any medical criteria not met as well as details of recommended conditions and monitoring requirements for a conditional licence. Medical information that is not relevant to the patient’s fitness to drive should not be included on this form for privacy reasons.

Assessing Fitness to Drive

The medical standards for private and commercial drivers are set out in 'Assessing Fitness to Drive' which is jointly published by the National Transport Commission and AUSTROADS. The standards are used by all licensing jurisdictions across Australia and available on the AUSTROADS website www.austroads.com.au.

Completed Medical Report

If a patient has presented you with a green RMS medical report forms, once completed the medical report form should be returned to the patient to take back to an RMS motor registry for immediate processing.

Visual Acuity and Visual Fields Standards for Driving

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<th>Vision Condition</th>
<th>Cars, Motorcycles, Light Trucks</th>
<th>Buses and Trucks</th>
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| Visual Acuity    | • A person is not fit to hold an unconditional licence if uncorrected VA in the better eye is worse than 6/12.  
• A conditional licence may be issued if this standard is met with corrective lenses.  
• A driver licence will not be issued where VA in the better eye is worse than 6/24.  
• VA should be measured in each eye separately, without correction. | • A person is not fit to hold an unconditional licence if the person’s uncorrected VA is worse than 6/9 in the better eye, or worse than 6/18 in either eye.  
• A conditional licence may be issued where this is met with corrective lenses.  
• Taxi Drivers are not licensed by the RMS but by the Department of Transport, but the same standards apply. |
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| Visual Field     | • A person is not fit to hold an unconditional licence if the binocular field does not have a horizontal extent of at least 110 degrees within 10 degrees above or below the horizontal midline, or if there is significant field loss/scotoma within a central radius of 20 degrees of foveal fixation.  
• A conditional licence may be considered taking into account any information provided by an optometrist or ophthalmologist. | • A person is not fit to hold an unconditional licence if they have any visual field defect.  
• A conditional licence may be granted subject to evidence from an optometrist or ophthalmologist that the following conditions are met:  
1. Binocular visual field has an extent of at least 140 degrees within 10 degrees above and below the horizontal midline.  
2. No significant field loss/scotoma, hemianopia, quadrantinopia likely to impede driving.  
3. Field loss is static and unlikely to progress rapidly. |

Visual fields may be initially screened by confrontation. Anyone suspected of having, or known to have, a fields defect should be assessed by automated static perimetry. If testing suggests requirements for an unconditional license are not met, an Esterman binocular fields test should be performed.

**Colour vision**

There are no specific requirements relating to colour vision. Patients with a colour deficiency likely to affect their capacity to respond appropriately to signal lights should be informed of this.

**Progressive conditions**

Monitor regularly and advise in advance of potential future impact on driving ability. Progressive conditions include e.g. cataract, glaucoma, optic neuropathy, retinitis pigmentosa.

**Monocular drivers**

A conditional license may be considered where the visual field is 110 degrees and the VA satisfactory in the remaining eye. Generally, monocular drivers will not be held fit to hold a commercial vehicle license, however, it may be considered on advice of an ophthalmologist or optometrist.
Health Professional's Checklist When Completing the ‘Green’ RMS Medical Report Form

- Must complete ‘Treating Doctor or Medical Specialist Certification’ on front of medical report, including the standards patient was examined to
- Must tick one of the 3 options available on the first page regarding ‘conditional’ or ‘unconditional’ licence
- Must complete doctor or medical specialist details (doctors stamp & signature is acceptable) and date the form
- Doctors/Specialists may assess visual acuity in section 1 Vision. However, if a patient has an eye disorder or visual field defect they need to be referred to an Optometrist or Ophthalmologist to have this section of the form completed. The Optometrist or Ophthalmologist must include their name, date, signature and telephone number on the form
- Must complete all other sections relevant to patient and where appropriate, provide additional information which may be helpful in determining medical fitness and competency to drive. Medical information that is not relevant to the patient’s fitness to drive should not be included on this form for privacy reasons

What Does Each Result Option Mean to RMS?

Option 1 – Meets the relevant medical criteria for an unconditional driver licence.
RMS interprets this to mean that the person does not have a medical condition that requires a regular medical review and is considered medically fit to drive.

Option 2 – Does not meet the relevant medical criteria for an unconditional or conditional driver licence.
RMS interprets this to mean that the person is not medically fit to drive.

Option 3 – Meets the relevant medical criteria for a conditional licence, subject to a periodic review.
RMS interprets this to mean that the person is considered medically fit to drive but requires further medical review or driving assessment, or driving condition or vehicle modification. This option should be ticked by the health professional for any person with a medical or licence condition, who they still consider medically fit to drive.

Reporting a medical condition for the first time
If, in the course of treatment, a patient’s condition is found to affect their ability to drive safely and they are not in the possession of a RMS medical report form the health professional should, in the first instance, encourage the patient to report their condition to RMS. A standard form, Medical condition notification form, has been produced to facilitate this process. The health professional completes the form, explains the circumstances to the patient and asks the patient to return the form to their nearest motor registry.
Health Professional Direct Reporting to RMS

A health professional may feel obliged to make a report directly to RMS in certain situations. For example where the patient is either:

- Unable to appreciate the impact of their condition; OR
- Unable to take notice of the health professional’s recommendations due to cognitive impairment; OR
- Continues to drive despite appropriate advice and is likely to endanger the public.

This may be done using a copy of the medical condition notification form and sending it to RMS Licence Review Unit at either Locked Bag 14 Grafton NSW 2460 or facsimile to 02 6640 2894. Even when making a report directly to RMS, the health professional should inform the patient that they are doing so.

RMS will also accept a letter directly from the treating health professional. The letter should include sufficient information to enable RMS to make a decision. That is, the patient’s details (full name, date of birth address), any relevant medical conditions or concerns, and if the patient meets the relevant medical criteria specified in the ‘Assessing Fitness to Drive’. You may also, if deemed appropriate, make recommendations for the patient to undergo further assessments, such as a specialist review or driving assessment.

Confidentiality

While there is no mandatory reporting requirement in New South Wales for an optometrist or health care provider to report a patient who is unfit to drive, Optometrists Association encourages optometrists, in the first instance, to ensure patients not meeting the visual standards are aware of their legal requirements to self-report, and encourage and support them to do so voluntarily.

The requirement of confidentiality is fundamental to the relationship between health care providers and their patients, and is also subject to legislation. On some occasions, however, there may be justifiable reasons for breaching this confidentiality. The duty of an optometrist to maintain patient confidentiality might be outweighed by considerations of public safety if the a patient suffers from a serious vision condition, and the optometrist believes there is a risk a person may harm themselves or others by continuing to drive.

All reporting should ideally be done with the knowledge, and preferably the consent, of the individual. However, for various reasons, this may not always be possible. While it is preferable any report be made with the individual’s consent, there is statutory protection if an optometrist reports a person in good faith because they believe a person to be unsafe to drive or hold a license.

Further Information

Optometrists seeking further information about Assessing Fitness to Drive standards, the medical report form or the older driver or medical review schemes can contact RMS Licence Review Unit on 13 22 13.
More information about the driver vision standard and related matters can be found on the following websites:


http://austroads.com.au/component/content/article/4-driver-licences/31-assessing-fitness-to-drive