

Question on Notice

No. 261

Asked on Tuesday 06 March 2006

MR SEENEY asked the Minister for Transport and Main Roads (MR LUCAS)—

QUESTION:

In view of the implementation as of 30 April 2007 of medical standards for commercial vehicle licensing that will mean that those persons with medical conditions, such as Insulin-requiring Diabetes Mellitus, will need to seek specialist opinion on an annual basis, and in view of the fact that specialists in rural and regional areas are extremely limited in numbers and lengthy delays are experienced for appointments—

Will he consider allowing GPs to complete the medical conditions forms with the understanding that only if deemed necessary by the GP will the person be referred for specialist opinion prior to completing the medical conditions form and, if not, why not?

ANSWER:

In Queensland, between 2000 and 2005, medical-related factors were identified as a contributing factor in crashes that killed 35 people, seriously injured 825 people, with another 822 drivers receiving minor injuries.

Poorly managed medical conditions may result in loss of consciousness, or affect perception, judgement, response time, and/or physical capability.

The requirement for appropriate medical certification, including from an appropriate specialist for some high risk conditions, has been in place since 1997.

A person with a medical condition who drives a private vehicle, such as the family car, generally only requires periodic assessment from a General Practitioner (GP) and not specialist assessment. Nevertheless there are certain medical conditions which necessitate an assessment by a medical specialist. These conditions are detailed in the national Austroads *"Assessing Fitness to Drive"* publication which was developed in consultation with a wide range of medical professional organisations and all Australian licensing authorities.

The government recognises that problems may exist for some commercial drivers with a medical condition accessing specialists in rural and remote areas. The government also recognises the financial impact of not having a licence on a commercial vehicle driver and the implication for the road freight industry. For this reason certificates from general practitioners have been accepted with advice provided to the licence holder that they should obtain a certificate from an appropriate specialist within 12 months.

Queensland Transport is currently reviewing its commercial vehicle driver medical assessment policy and is discussing suitable options with Queensland Health to resolve this issue.