



ATZ Driving Solutions

Finding solutions to increase independence and road safety

Potential to Drive Assessments

Why do I need an assessment?

Obtaining a Driver's licence is generally seen as an opportunity to increase an individual's independence and progress to the newfound freedoms of being able to drive themselves to school, work and beyond.

However, for individuals living with diverse developmental disorders such as autism; physical disabilities like cerebral palsy; or adolescent survivors of childhood cancer or traumatic brain injury it can be a different progression.

The question is often posed- Should a person just try and get their L's? Do they need to disclose their disability? Are they going to be safe.. what should we do???



A Potential to Drive assessment is tailored to look in real time at the individual, before they get a NSW learners licence. It will provide a clinical objective opinion on whether they should proceed on the path to obtaining their L's, consider participating in a skill development program to enhance driving readiness or consider alternative options for community access.



What should I expect?

The clinical assessment is the first stage, where we explore vision, physical and cognitive abilities, as well as look at medical history, educational background, and the person's understanding of general road knowledge. We also involve the parent or primary caregiver in this component to explore development of life skills, milestones and opinions of maturity.

Usually, immediately after the clinical interview we complete the practical driving component in a dual control car with the driving instructor. This involves looking at lane position awareness, searching for hazards, problem solving and graded memory/recall activities.

For people that already have a Learner licence please see brochure on Occupational Therapy Fitness to Drive Assessment.

Why are parents/carers involved?

Learning to drive, builds on many skills we traditionally learn early in life. So we involve the parents or significant others and ask where they think the client is up to.

This helps to explore if there are gaps in skill development, or a need to focus on certain areas such as attention shifting, problem solving, sensory processing or focusing.

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What is the outcome?

There are two possible outcomes from a Potential to Drive assessment;

1. Client has Potential to Learn and should be supported to obtain their Learner licence
2. Client does not have sufficient skills to be considered ready at this time to progress to obtaining a Learner Licence.

Depending on the nature and extent of a person's physical disabilities, vehicle modifications may also be required to compensate and provide necessary physical control.

Modifications can range from simple additions such as cushions, or mirrors, through to engineered changes to steering such as a steering aid, installation of hand controls or left foot accelerator's. These modifications can be viewed and recommended during the Potential to Drive, however cannot be trialled by the client on road until they hold a Learner licence.



So then what happens?

For clients interested in increasing their driving readiness ATZ Driving Solutions offer tailored capacity building sessions to target the disability specific areas of concern, increase the client's confidence and independence with specific life skills.

Once the individual has obtained their Learner licence it is recommended that an Occupational Therapy Fitness to Drive Assessment is undertaken so that they can be assessed in their capacity practically driving an automatic vehicle.

This assessment can also be utilised to highlight if specialised driver instruction will be indicated to assist the person progress from their Learner licence to Provisional Licence in a timely manner.

Driving and the Law

In NSW when applying for a Driver's licence the applicant has a legal responsibility to notify Transport for NSW (RMS) of any medical, physical or mental condition that could impact on driving. This does not prevent you from getting a licence, but may result in needing an additional form completed by your GP or treating specialist.

Similarly, after obtaining your licence, if there has been a change to your situation, you need to speak with your GP, or specialist to confirm you are medically fit to continue driving.

If you decide to start or return to driving without clearance and are in an accident, you may be considered criminally liable and subject to prosecution under Part 5A of the Crimes Act 1900.

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